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ABSTRACT

The editorial, "Some Aspects of the Educational Change Dynamic: Setting School Autonomy and Evaluation in Context" (Cecilia Braslavsky), explains the focus of this issue. This "Open File: School Autonomy and Evaluation" section contains: "Introduction to the Open File" (Norberto Bottani; Bernard Favre); "IPES The System of Indicators for Secondary School Management in France" (Philomene Abi-Saab; Patrick Alt); "Use of 'Value-Added' Measures in School Evaluation: A View from England" (Lesley Saunders); "School Self-Evaluation in the Netherlands: Development of the ZEBO-Instrumentation" (Maria A. Hendriks; Simone Doolaard; Roel J. Bosker); "Analysis of School's Functioning, Assessment and Self-Assessment: Primary Schools in Geneva" (Bernard Favre); "Self-Governing Schools and Accountability in New Zealand" (Edward B. Fiske; Helen F. Ladd); "On the Politics of Performance in South African Education: Autonomy, Accountability and Assessment" (Jonathan D. Jansen); "School Evaluation in Chile: The Case of SNED" (Juan Casassus); and "School Autonomy and Assessment in Mexico" (Sylvia Schmelkes). The "Trends/Cases" section contains: "Modern Education in Afghanistan" (Saif R. Samady) and "Education, Hope and the Children of Afghanistan" (Max Grantham). The "Profiles of Famous Educators" section contains an article on "Basil Bernstein (1924-2000)" (Alan R. Sadovnik). (BT)

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Norberto Bottani, Editor
Bernard Favre, Editor

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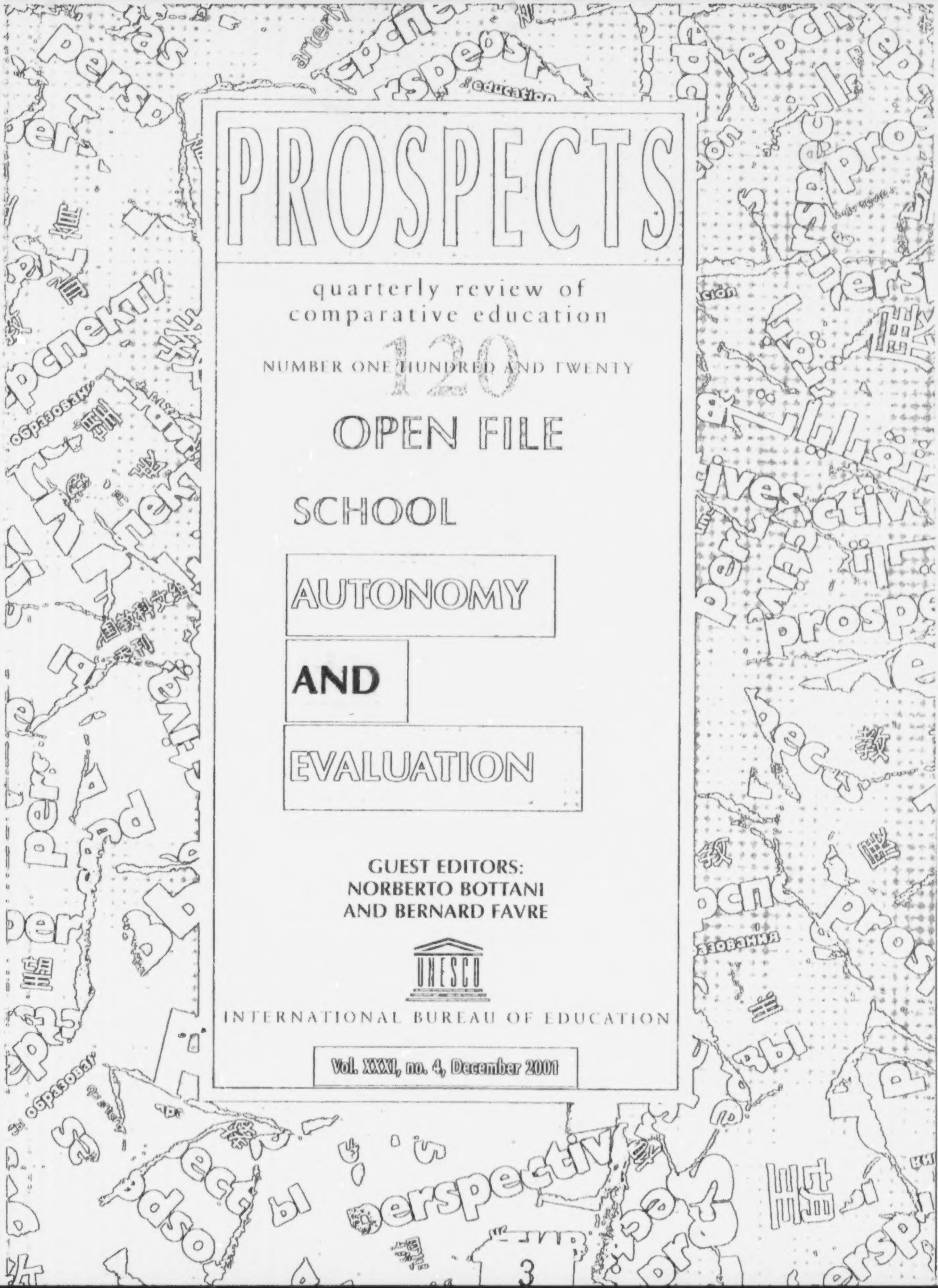

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NUMBER ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY

OPEN FILE

SCHOOL AUTONOMY AND EVALUATION

**GUEST EDITORS:
NORBERTO BOTTANI
AND BERNARD FAVRE**

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EDITORIAL

SOME ASPECTS OF THE EDUCATIONAL CHANGE DYNAMIC: SETTING SCHOOL AUTONOMY AND EVALUATION IN CONTEXT

Cecilia Braslavsky

The construction of modern schools and national education systems became possible through two models of management and educational policy. The first was the 'community' model and the second was the 'nation-State' model. Both can be found throughout developed countries, sometimes in open conflict, at other times in more or less productive partnership.

The 'community' approach was the guiding principle in the Anglo-Saxon world. In England and in the Netherlands, for instance, schools were set up by parish churches in close collaboration with the local community. As municipalities were created, they set up lay establishments in the most prosperous towns of Northern Europe and also in the north of Italy and even France in the sixteenth century, in competition with ecclesiastical institutions. This approach was even more evident in the wave of setting up and expanding education in North America. Adopting modern terminology, we could say that these were based on the 'bottom-up' approach.

The 'nation-State' model was most popular from the eighteenth century in the major States, first in those of the feudal type or the later ones which benefited from State support for capitalist and industrial modernization, such as the despotic States of Spain and France or the French republics of the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. Once again adopting the terminology of professional jargon, we may say that these are examples of the 'top-down' approach.

The 'communal' model was guided by a decision-making process that today we would classify as 'micro-political'. Schools took an enormous number of decisions concerning what and how to teach. They decided, for example, syllabi and curricula without much interference from the public authorities. With a large amount of power entrusted to the school, the interactions between the different partners were—and still are—very important. We may even say that they were delegated this power by higher levels of administration. Using this model, throughout the centuries communities were slowly building a strong civil society which organized different local communities through exchanges, dialogue and debate.

Inspired by the success of the development of the 'community' model into strong civil societies with States at their service and—sometimes—also critical remarks about the undesirable effects of the 'nation-State' model in limiting teachers' pedagogical freedom, a large number of thinkers and institutions put forward the idea in the 1980s and 1990s of strengthening the autonomy of the school as a way of overcoming educational problems. This proposal to strengthen the autonomy of the school was accompanied by similar proposals to strengthen the mechanisms for evaluating the outcomes of pupils' learning. The Open File in this issue of *PROSPECTS* presents the school autonomy/evaluating-the-outcomes-of-pupil-learning equation.

Probably one of the principal lessons learned from these two decades was that in the search for alternatives it is necessary to combine components of bottom-up management (for example, by strengthening school autonomy) with others from the top-down approach (such as certain types of standardized evaluation, in order to allow different levels of learning to be compared).

Even so, the moment has probably come to avoid falling into the trap of a dialogue or discussion over the advantages between the 'top-down' and the 'bottom-up' models. In fact, we now have technical means available that allow us to construct a network model taking advantage of new technologies. It should operate by bringing together various levels of management in a much more intense interaction and redefining them as co-operative partners (and not in a hierarchical relationship) in processes through which all existing institutions intervene in an articulated and productive manner. The question that must be asked is what are the competences required to create such relationships, whether the partners have them or not and—if they don't have them—how do they get them.

In this connection, it is important to take into account the characteristics of each context. The two articles that we are printing in this issue of *PROSPECTS* on education in Afghanistan link its past and its present, and provide evidence that no abstract theory about management models is applicable and pertinent in all situations. There may be general guidelines which direct our thinking at one stage, but they must always be interpreted and revised in each case according to circumstances. How do we begin the educational reconstruction of Afghanistan? What do we learn from its past, its present, and the efforts to combine autonomy and evaluation in other parts of the world? These and other questions could help those concerned by this situation towards finding the answers they are looking for.

This issue of *PROSPECTS* closes with a profile of Basil Bernstein, who was recognized as a leading sociologist throughout the world. His pioneering work over the past four decades illuminated our understanding of the relationship among political economy, family, language and schooling. While his early works explored the relationships among the social division of labour, the family and the school, his later works on pedagogic discourse, practice and educational transmissions led to a theory of social and educational codes and their effect on social reproduction.

SCHOOL AUTONOMY AND EVALUATION

INTRODUCTION TO THE OPEN FILE

Norberto Bottani and Bernard Favre

Evaluation is a central concern in education policy and education research today.[1] The interest in it is not new. Education systems are very much concerned by the 'demand' for assessment, which for many years focused on the activity of pupils (their learning) and, to a lesser extent, that of teachers (their teaching skills). However, for some twenty years now the field has been evolving in two ways: on the one hand, evaluation has moved beyond school circles to become a front-line political issue; and on the other, it has been extended from pupils and teachers—let us say, people taken individually—to cover schools, systems and training policies.

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The institutional effect

With regard to schools, the actual concept of an 'institutional effect' and its existence were not at first recognized. At the end of the 1960s, James Coleman[2] and Christopher Jencks[3] questioned whether it was possible to alter the distribution of academic performance by acting on school-specific variables, such as class size, teaching hours, teachers' qualifications and the organization of the school. According to Jencks: 'Differences between schools have rather trivial long-term effects, and [...] eliminating differences between schools would do almost nothing to make adults more equal. Even eliminating differences in the amount of schooling people get would do relatively little to make adults more equal'.[4] These conclusions, which minimized the impact of differences between schools on performance, were not accepted unanimously and were the starting point for a long series of studies which opened up the 'black box' of the school. Researchers went into schools not to assess pupils, but to see what really went on inside, to observe the way in which the school functioned and to discover factors which did influence pupil attainment. This entry into the 'black box' enabled a number of variables to be pinpointed which can be said to have a definite and positive effect on learning.

The study by Michèle Rutter and her fellow researchers, B. Morgan, P. Mortimer and G. Houston, on the effects of secondary schools in England,[5] which was among the critical works produced in reaction to the work of Coleman and Jencks, was an important step forward and marked a necessary shift in the history of school evaluation. The British researchers demonstrated that the effects of schools on pupil attainment are far from negligible. In so doing they opened up a new field of study, generating a whole flurry of research throughout the 1980s, notably on 'school quality and development'[6] and effective schools. OECD's International School Improvement Project (ISIP)[7] was part of the new trend and was to contribute significantly to its development.

Editorial series on best school practice are one of the unexpected by-products of these studies on the quality and effectiveness of schools. They were produced in order to 'spread the good news', that is, to inform practitioners of solutions that, on the basis of research findings, could be said to improve education. The explanatory brochure *What works*[8] was one of the very first examples. The idea was taken up again a few years later by CERI, the OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, which in the 1990s started to publish reports in a series entitled 'Innovations that work'. At the end of the 1990s, the International Bureau of Education (IBE) carried on this work by publishing its series 'Educational practices' in collaboration with the International Academy of Education.[9]

These thirty years of research into schools have resulted in a considerable mass of data and analyses which have focused attention on the functioning of schools by providing information that has itself led to changes in how the results of teaching and the ways in which pupils learn are interpreted. As Ballion summed it up:

research work on the 'effective school' reveals that at this level [that of the school] it is possible not only to identify differential factors of effectiveness, explaining for instance that schools with identical contextual and compositional variables can have unequal results, and that in any one school, one primary school, there can be, as a recent French study has shown, teachers who are effective and others who are not; but also that the school, even if it is not the only one, is an appropriate level of action for improvement.[10]

Schools have therefore ceased to be a mysterious world, shielded from indiscreet and prying eyes, in which teachers tend to shut themselves off in order to defend their mission. The research has also transformed the way in which schools are presented, not as 'production units', but as educational communities, learning organizations where professional teams are at work.

From knowing about schools to evaluating them

The debate on evaluating schools has a relatively short history, as becomes clear, for instance, on reading the report of the working group on the evaluation of the pre-service training system written by Robert Ballion as part of the work of the education/training/research commission of the tenth policy guidance plan in France, published in 1991.[11] Reference to school evaluation in the report is confined to a single paragraph entitled 'The evaluation of production units'. The school is presented as a production unit, that is, as an 'entity generating its own functionality'; it can therefore no longer be conceived of 'as simply an aggregate of individuals',[12] it is effective in its own right. School evaluation is not addressed in *The international encyclopaedia of educational evaluation*, published in 1990.[13]

Nevertheless, the new way of looking at the school has introduced the idea that it is just as important to evaluate education systems themselves, by evaluating the performance of the pupils taken as a whole and the quality of schools, as it is to evaluate individual performance (pupils and teachers). Moreover, this evaluation in the 'quality and development of schools' research context aims above all to be 'formative'; it is not a question of ranking or sanctioning schools, but of providing professionals with the tools to reflect on their practices. As J.-L. Derouet has pointed out, school evaluations are useful as a potential means of improving life at school, for instance 'as a way of bringing about a measure of civil peace within an institution riven by antagonism between clans', or an instrument 'of cultural integration for a community'.[14] Evaluation can alert the teaching staff to where its knowledge is lacking, inform it of what is basically needed for the smooth running of the school, and so on.

School evaluation: fears and risks

From the early 1990s the success of educational indicators aroused even further interest in these challenges, but at the same time introduced into the field of research and policy a new dimension which had previously been approached only with great caution, namely comparison between schools, variations within schools and between schools, and the difference in results between education systems. To that was added the fact that in many countries school evaluation was imposed as part of a reform package giving schools more independence. The implication of these reforms[15]—freedom of choice of schools, training vouchers, liberalization of methods of administration of school systems—increased the need for knowledge about the nature, performance and functioning of schools, but in so doing gave evaluation, at least initially, a punitive function as much as an improving one.

This development has raised both legitimate and exaggerated expectations and fears about evaluation. While, on the whole, there is agreement on the need to evaluate education and not just pupils taken individually, there is significant disagreement as to the nature and modalities of the procedures to be adopted. The proliferation of experimental and formal evaluation programmes has clarified the debate only in part. Scientists are divided on the subject of the methods and effect of evaluation. As to teachers, they remain suspicious and are unconvinced by new schemes or proposals for participatory evaluation, arguments extolling the formative nature of evaluation and demonstrations of the advantages and merits of self-evaluation as compared with any form of external evaluation. Evaluation smacks of heresy. In countries where there is a wide variety of pupil assessment practices, such as in the United States of America, most teachers have to submit routinely to the chore of tests and questionnaires which, it may be supposed, a substantial majority would willingly do without.

School evaluation is therefore being introduced in a climate marked by distrust, doubt and scepticism. The purpose of this Open File is to take stock of developments in this field. To some extent it is complementary to the open file on the evaluation of education systems published in vol. XXVIII, no. 1, March 1998, of *Prospects*, which in a way foreshadowed it.[16]

Interesting avenues for research are opening up and some of them are explored in the articles in this Open File. Having said that, we must be under no illusion: as pointed out above, the evaluation of schools can also be used to regulate the education market and stimulate competition between schools. The texts presented here do not lend themselves to this purpose and even draw attention to this kind of misuse which jeopardizes the transformation of schools into privileged places of learning and development for pupils.

The Open File

The Open File we present here contains two types of text: (a) articles based on European situations, describing ways of evaluating schools that are consistent with their independence; and (b) papers illustrating how the independence of schools is coupled with their evaluation in four different national settings.

Needless to say, any operation to evaluate schools must, in order to succeed, be acceptable to teachers, whatever the type and method of evaluation adopted. The panoply of evaluation methods is such today that any may be envisaged as long as its scope, limits, risks, advantages and disadvantages are fully grasped. There is nevertheless one factor that can never be overlooked if the evaluation is expected to help improve education and learning, and that is the trust of teachers. If they are not convinced of the benefits that they, in the exercise of their profession, can derive from evaluation, there is a potential risk of wasting resources and time, producing inaccurate data and sending out the wrong signals. Evaluation of schools cannot therefore be carried out without the teachers. It is important to take the full measure of this elementary axiom in the knowledge that the conviction of teachers in this regard can by no means be taken for granted and that in general evaluation, despite all the advances made, in particular in recent decades, is still not an integral part of educational practices or, even more so, of school management. All the articles in the file hinge on this requirement: how do we reconcile evaluation mechanisms with teachers' concerns? How do we design evaluations that are acceptable to the key players in education? What happens when evaluation practices that disregard the teachers' expectations and ignore their daily professional concerns are forced on schools? To what experiences may we refer in order to appraise factors of success and failure in evaluation procedures? Is there a strong connection between typologies of evaluation and teacher behaviour?

The article by *Abi-Saab and Alt*, the first in the European part of the file, describes France's experience with secondary school indicators (IPES). Among the cases described in this file, this is the one that proposes the closest linkage between a source outside the schools and the schools themselves. School-specific data, processed statistically and reduced to a set of key indicators, are supplied to the schools, together with a special computer application, so that they can be used as benchmarks to assist teachers and school heads in analysing outcomes.

In the same vein, the text by *Saunders* presents studies carried out in the United Kingdom to measure the value added to schools, in other words to correct and relativize the raw evaluation data by incorporating into them the particular variables of a school. This approach meets a demand for fairness, as it is not possible to put on an equal footing schools which are obviously very different from each other in a number of ways. Teaching in a school in a disadvantaged area is not the same as teaching in a school in a prosperous area: the pupils have a different cultural and social capital, the schools do not enjoy the same facilities and the staff itself varies considerably from one school to the next. These parameters must, then, be taken into account when a school is being evaluated. Saunders sums up the characteristics of the value-added-based approach and makes recommendations drawn from practical experience regarding the measurement and use of added value. In addition, she shows the way in which schools make use of the data on their added value that are measured by specialist centres and made available to them. The French and British experiences, though inspired by different theories, resemble each other in that they are characterized by the transmission to schools of tailored statistical information which should or could provide input for self-evaluation.

The experiences in the Netherlands and in Geneva described in the papers by *Hendriks et al.* and *Favre*, mark an important new stage, that of the internalization

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of evaluation practices and the disappearance from the scene of specialist external bodies providing *ad hoc* data. This can be seen in the ZEBO project, which endeavours to provide the self-evaluation approach with credible and valid instruments. In other words, it is not enough to carry out self-evaluation; it must be scientifically sound, leaving no room for improvization and approximation. The question then is knowing how to equip schools to be fully in command of the evaluation operation by making use of the potential that independence can free up within school communities. The solution consists in ensuring that the school itself has control over the evaluation instruments and can identify with their purpose and use. In the Dutch experience, it is the stakeholders themselves—administration, teachers and pupils—who decide what information to gather, who gathers it and who processes it.

The Geneva study described by Favre falls within the context of a major reform of primary education in the Canton of Geneva. However, it concerns a phase that is upstream of evaluation and self-evaluation practices. This means that the instrumental dimension of the analysis is lost but in exchange it has a density and range that were missing altogether from previous exercises, since it covers the history of the school and an analysis of its organization and the elements that go into making it an educational community. The object is to describe the particular organizational rationale into which evaluation and self-evaluation necessarily fit. This rationale helps to explain, at least in part, teacher resistance to evaluation and any departures from the original purpose of the evaluation. As a result, the Geneva study may open up another field of study, namely the relationship between organizational learning and school evaluation and self-evaluation practices, or the ways in which the stakeholders' own knowledge of their school as an organization can be used for purposes of evaluation.

In the second part of the file there are four studies describing national policies dealing with the problem of regulating the independence of schools. The situations described in this section are very different. *Fiske and Ladd* shed light on New Zealand's experience in the context of an ambitious reform launched since 1989 and aimed at decentralizing the administration of the education system, giving considerable independence to schools, but without setting up a restrictive evaluation and self-evaluation mechanism to offset the effects of decentralization and act as an instrument to regulate the system as a whole.

Jansen describes developments in South Africa, where the requirement for school evaluation has taken the form of officially requiring schools to carry out their own evaluation, the object being to regulate schools and ensure that they align themselves on the objectives of national education policy. The independence of schools and the concern to embed and strengthen good practices within schools that led them to obtain increasingly satisfactory results are overshadowed by the imposition, in an almost underhand way, of a sophisticated control mechanism entailing the hijacking of self-evaluation. It is legitimate in this case to talk of hijacking. The independence of schools is to all intents and purposes devoid of meaning and scope.

The experience of Chile described by *Casassus* provides insights into an interesting new approach to school evaluation which aims to reduce teachers' distrust

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of evaluation schemes and secure their commitment to a process which they can only partly call their own in order to ensure that, in the end, evaluation represents an opportunity to improve education. The Chilean approach could be said to be halfway between the impasse of the South African model analysed by Jansen and the extreme solution of a dilution of self-evaluation in a self-referential practice that would be found in the Geneva model described by Favre, if it were seen as a form of self-evaluation. The school evaluation system introduced in Chile is not centred on teachers but on the school as a recognized community through incitements and rewards provided for and paid when the school is managed effectively by the teaching team.

Lastly, the paper by *Schmelkes* gives a particularly clear illustration of the difficulties and deadlock encountered when seeking to reconcile the independence of schools with evaluation, as we have already observed in South African education policy. The balance between the independence of schools and the evaluation of education is a delicate one; it is to be found neither in the external nor in the internal evaluation approach. The New Zealand solution puts a premium on independence but does not provide an evaluation model that takes account of the need to move a large group of schools forward, together if possible, in order to avoid the exacerbation of disparities in the education on offer. In France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom ways and means of combining complex evaluation mechanisms for the benefit of schools are being tested. In Mexico, in a situation which is far less advantageous economically, the independence of schools is a theme that policies address with caution—there are reforms along those lines, as in New Zealand and Chile, but in the form of closely-controlled experiments, warranted by the enormous diversity in the supply of education available in the country. The fear that independence might lead to greater, rather than less, injustice in education is in fact a basic theme in this debate: we still do not have proof that independence—even when it is implemented partially or selectively—makes for a better distribution of educational opportunity, but equally we know that there is no definite proof that the model of centralized management established to ensure the uniform and therefore fair development of education throughout a country has been successful either. In the second case, there is abundant data, even though in many countries—not only in Mexico—the authorities disregard them or do not even know that they exist.

In conclusion, even if on a theoretical level it is acknowledged that the self-evaluation of schools has not only a formative value but should be part of the raft of new forms of regulation of education systems, in practice, the coexistence—although it would be more accurate to say intermeshing—of independence and evaluation has proved highly problematic. However, as shown by the experiences presented in this Open File, the intermeshing of central and local regulation is possible, but cannot be done on the cheap: it requires considerable investment in terms of scientific and financial input, but above all in terms of clearly formulated objectives that enable schools to know from the outset what to expect, without excessive illusions but also without suspicion.

Notes

1. See, for example, the Open File 'The evaluation of education systems', *Prospects* (Paris), vol. XXVIII, no. 1, March 1998.
2. J. Coleman, et al, *Equality of educational opportunity*, Washington, DC, United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, 1966.
3. C. Jencks, *Inequality: a reassessment of the effect of family and schooling in America*, New York, Basic Books, 1972.
4. Ibid., p. 16.
5. M. Rutter, et al., *Fifteen thousand hours: secondary schools and their effects on children*, London, Open Books, 1979.
6. For a synoptic study of this research trend, see C. Szaday, X. Büeler and B. Favre, *Schulqualität und Schulentwicklung: Trendbericht* [School quality and development: trend report], Bern, PNR33 Direction; Aarau, Swiss Co-ordination Centre for Education Research, 1996.
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10. Robert Ballion, L'évaluation du système de formation initiale [Evaluation of the pre-service training system] *in: Eduquer pour demain : acteurs et partenaires* [see note 11], p. 143.
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14. J.-L. Derouet, L'établissement scolaire, des principes aux réalités [The school, from principles to reality], *Sciences humaines* (Auxerre, France), no. 111, December 2000.
15. See in particular the summary paper by M. Duru-Bellat and D. Meuret, Nouvelles formes de régulation dans les systèmes éducatifs étrangers : autonomie et choix des établissements scolaires [New forms of regulation in foreign education systems: independence and choice of schools], *Revue française de pédagogie* (Paris), no. 135, 2001, p. 173-221, and T. L. Good and J. Braden, *The great school debate: choice, vouchers and charters*, London, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000.
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IPES—

THE SYSTEM OF INDICATORS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT IN FRANCE

Philomène Abi-Saab and Patrick Alt

Each year since 1994, the French Ministry of Education has provided the heads of public secondary schools, through the relevant *académie*,[1] with a set of indicators to facilitate the running of schools, known as IPES (*Indicateurs pour le pilotage des établissements secondaires*), together with data for each *académie* and for France as a whole and computer software supplied by the ministry.

This set of indicators satisfies a number of needs felt by those who work in the education system. After describing these needs and the chosen way of meeting them, this article will focus on assessment of the 'performance' of *lycées* (upper secondary schools), through the concept of added value in particular, and will go on to examine the conditions necessary for the optimal use of these indicators.

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The origin and organization of the IPES system

THE NEED TO MEET SEVERAL DIFFERENT TYPES OF REQUIREMENT

The concern to provide schools with indicators dates back to the 1970s. There has, however, been a change in the objectives and conception of these indicators in the last ten years, due partly to changes in school management policy and a strong demand for assessment indicators to facilitate measurement of a school's performance, but also to the evolution of information systems.

In the 1970s and until the end of the 1980s, for example, school 'management charts' (*tableaux de bord*), developed at the ministry, contained indicators that facilitated analysis and decision-making. They proved, however, to be a complex and cumbersome tool because of the difficulty of obtaining the necessary information.

The rationale underlying the school plans (*projets d'établissement*), an idea introduced in the early 1980s and consolidated by the 1989 education act, prompted the design of new indicators to assist initial diagnosis, the making of choices, the fixing of objectives and the evaluation of the plan's implementation. Indicators were developed locally by the various parties involved in the system, with the result that the plans could not be assessed in a homogeneous manner.

Furthermore, the publication by the press of gross *baccalauréat* pass rates and the *lycées* 'league tables' based solely on these rates,[2] ignoring various other aspects of their activities and their context, combined with the popularity of these publications with the general public, made it urgent for the education system to produce its own reports on the performance of schools by providing indicators of success that took account of the problems they encountered. As a result, three performance indicators for *lycées*, based on the results of their pupils in the *baccalauréat* examination and included among the battery of IPES indicators, were published and made available to all those involved in the education system, from senior officials to parents.[3]

This was also a time of rising unemployment, especially for those with fewer qualifications, and of increased job insecurity and a general malaise prompted by these trends. Scholastic success and obtaining the highest possible qualifications thus came to be regarded as a safeguard against this anxiety about the future.

These factors—the many forms of assessment, the ranking of *lycées* by certain newspapers or periodicals, the introduction of 'school plans', national and regional investment in education, and public disquiet about the future—contributed to the rise of a demand for indicators for the evaluation of schools. At the same time, progress in the procedures used for the collection of data on pupils, teachers and educational structures has made it possible, using new, computerized information systems, to standardize the information gathered and thus provide schools with a standard set of indicators.

Organization of the system: several types of indicators

DESCRIPTION AND CONTENT OF THE IPES SYSTEM

The IPES system makes no claim to cover all areas necessary for a fully comprehensive knowledge and an all-embracing assessment of each school. It offers an approach to certain fundamental factors that facilitate an initial appraisal of the situation of the school but does not permit an exhaustive evaluation.

The areas covered are: characteristics of the population, operation of the school, resources, the local context and results.

Characteristics of the student population

These indicators apply to:

- socio-demographic characteristics, i.e. the percentage of disadvantaged pupils in the school as a whole and in each year, the percentage of pupils over 18, the percentage of foreign pupils;
- educational characteristics and previous schooling, i.e. the percentage of pupils repeating a year, the percentage of pupils two or more years behind, the educational standard of pupils entering *sixième*,[4] the first year of upper secondary general and technical education[5] and of upper secondary vocational education,[6] the percentage of pupils coming from the same school, and the percentage of pupils coming from private schools.

Operational indicators

These indicators attempt to give an objective picture of the way schools operate by showing the resources available to each school and taking into account its economic and social environment.

The resources available to the school: In order to gauge and describe the resources of each school, the IPES includes indicators concerning the hours worked, the main courses of study, the languages taught and the teachers.

The hours worked by a school are measured by two indicators, one for the number of hours of teaching in relation to the number of pupils and the other for the overall number of hours, including hours both of teaching, as shown by the timetable, and of back-up activities, i.e. the 'other hours' spent by all adult persons working in contact with the pupils—heads and senior staff, counsellors and career officers, supervisors of practical work and their assistants, documentalists, foreign-language assistants, monitors, housemasters, and so forth.

The indicators for the main courses of study and on the languages taught provide an overview of the range of subjects and languages offered by the school. In addition, they give the take-up rate in each case.

The indicators for teachers show their age, sex and level of academic qualification by the different categories of staff.

Data of a more qualitative nature: These data provide information on qualitative aspects such as the quality of life in the school, ancillary services and the status of *lycée* students, or factors indicative of the school climate, such as the accidents that occur and the proportion of timetable hours when teaching is actually provided to a student. These last two indicators relate to quantifiable phenomena, whereas the others are compound indicators that measure qualitative phenomena by ranking their constituent parts in relation to predetermined standards.

The indicator for the proportion of hours of teaching actually provided to a pupil makes it possible to assess, firstly, the number of hours lost owing to pupil absenteeism and, secondly, the number of hours lost owing to the non-replacement of teachers absent for reasons connected with the way the system operates, for training, for personal reasons or because the school is closed.

The indicator that measures the level of services related to life in the school makes it possible to assess the resources available to the school in respect of:

- hours of attendance of educational advisers, medical and paramedical staff, and school social workers; floor area of heated rooms open to pupils during the midday break; floor area of the boarding facilities; seating capacity of the school canteen;
- the significance of other activities as measured by the number of pupils registered in one or more clubs and number of members of the sports association.

Each of these elements is expressed in relation to the total number of pupils at the school and compared with benchmark standards or values provided by the ministry.

The indicator that measures the level of teaching-related services makes it possible to assess the services offered by career officers, psychologists whose function is to help pupils identify their vocational choices and formulate them more clearly. It also expresses the seating capacity of the documentation and information centre in relation to the total number of pupils, as well as the number of hours it is open with a documentalist in attendance. The latter element reveals the importance attached by the school to this service, which provides better conditions of study and work for pupils.

Indicators related to the local context

Two indicators are provided: one gives a general idea of the socio-economic fabric of the economic area in which the school is located (unemployment rate, description of active population, overview of means of production, population and housing data and data on pre-service training); the other one measures the school's level of integration into the local economy and brings out, through the nature and frequency of exchanges with local companies, the school's dynamism and its involvement in the integration of its pupils into the economic environment.

Indicators of results

The results obtained by a school are considered from different points of view: the aim is not to focus solely on success in examinations but to cover the entire school career of a pupil. Thus, gross pass rates are given by branch of study and by age, together with rates of access to higher education and diplomas, while taking account of redirection during secondary education towards other schools or into working life.

At the same time, these indicators aim to apply an 'added value' approach by comparing gross pass rates with 'expected' rates, that is to say, the rates that would be achieved if the pupils entered for the examination had succeeded in the same proportion as all comparable pupils in the *académie* or in the country as a whole.

Also included are indicators designed to evaluate the guidance provided by noting what subsequently happens to pupils who have dropped out of a particular level or left the school.

PREPARATION AND DISSEMINATION OF THE IPES SYSTEM

Three types of indicators can be distinguished by how and where they are drawn up: 'analytical' indicators calculated at the ministry; 'progress-report' indicators (*indicateurs de 'compte-rendu'*) and 'individualized' indicators worked out by the school concerned.

All of them are primarily intended to provide the school head with information helpful for management purposes, by means of the IPES software which is sent each year to each school at the time it is issued.

Those in positions of responsibility in the education system—officials of the *académie*, school inspectors and ministry officials—are given access to the 'analytical' indicators alone. They can be consulted on the Intranet, using a password provided by the computer system managers.

Only three indicators are made public. These are the performance indicators of general and technical *lycées* and vocational *lycées*, namely, the *baccalauréat* access rate, the *baccalauréat* pass rate and the proportion of successful *baccalauréat* candidates among school-leavers. These rates are accompanied for reference purposes by national figures and figures for each *académie*, and by 'expected' rates, which make it possible to measure added value; they may be consulted on the Internet site of the Ministry of National Education.

The 'analytical' indicators

These are calculated by the ministry from the computer files used for the management of pupils, for the management of teachers and for school structures. In each *collège* (lower secondary school) and public *lycée*, the same software (GEP—*gestion des élèves et des personnels*—management of pupils and staff) has been introduced, whereby files work their way regularly up towards the national authority via the regional *académie*. The aggregation of data from these computerized sources makes it possible to prepare regional and national statistics, which are in return made available to the schools, thus enabling them to see where they stand in a broader geographical context. These indicators, which are common to all schools of the same type—*collèges*, *lycées* and vocational *lycées*—are chiefly intended to assist overall management. They are accompanied by reference data for the nation as a whole and for each *académie*, enabling the school to place itself in the wider context. They concern data for the current year, but also include time series, thus facilitating a historical approach.

Schools can access these indicators by means of the *consultation* function of the IPES software supplied to them; they are also available on the ministry's Intranet, where they may be consulted—with the necessary password—by authorized staff at the various levels of national education (*département*, *académie*, central administration). They cover the student population (sex, profession and social category of head of family, age, educational retardation, grade repeating, previous schooling, nationality, grants, etc.), resources (information on teachers, courses offered, languages taught, structures, etc.), general organization and environment (size of classes, stability of teaching staff, data concerning the local employment area, etc.), and results (pass rate in examinations, access to higher education and diplomas, subsequent career of pupils with or without qualifications).

'Progress-report' indicators

These are calculated by the software package at the school itself, on the basis of data collected locally and not available in the national files. They relate to certain organizational aspects of the school, and are generally for internal use, but may be transmitted—though this is not compulsory—to the authorities of the *académie*. These indicators were designed in particular for reporting to the school's governing board on the running of the school and its results during the previous year. They are accompanied by national benchmark figures based on data derived from an annual survey of a national sample of schools.

They are focused essentially on the set of qualitative indicators dealing, for example, with the closeness of relations with the economic environment, the level of ancillary or teaching-related services or the status of pupils. They are also used to measure some quantitative indicators such as school accident rate, popularity of the school, proportion of timetable hours when pupils are not being taught, etc. The analysis of all these indicators enables the climate of the school to be assessed.

The indicator of 'hours without being taught' can be used to illustrate this type of indicator. It gauges one aspect of how the school is functioning, namely the actual amount of time during which an average pupil is being taught in relation to the theoretical amount of time planned at the beginning of the school year. In other words, it measures the amount of time lost by the pupil, not only because of his own absences, but also because of the non-replacement of absent teachers or closure of the school. The time 'losses' in fact need to be dealt with differently according to their different causes, of which the indicator distinguishes four:

(a) losses due to the way the system operates: organization and holding of examinations or student counselling sessions that might or might not entail the closing of the entire school, delays in the appointment of teachers, or closing of the school by decision of the authority or owing to circumstances outside its control, etc.;
(b) losses due to the in-service training of teachers—essentially non-replaced absences of teachers attending training courses;
(c) losses due to the non-replacement of teachers absent for personal reasons (illness, maternity, strikes, etc.);
(d) losses due to absence of the pupils themselves.

'Individualized' indicators

The software supplied with the indicators provides facilities for creating individualized variables and indicators geared to the specific monitoring operations that a school might wish to carry out. These indicators, specific to each school, are designed by the school head and calculated by the IPES software.

They may, for example, cover the use made of the documentation and information centre or disciplinary measures, with figures concerning the number of pupils sent before the disciplinary board, temporarily excluded or expelled.

Assessing the 'performance' of lycées: the special role of the 'analytical' indicators

The best-known in this set of indicators are the ones relating to results, the reason being that they can be accessed by the general public. Parents may consult them when looking for the most suitable school for the particular needs of their child, though their choice will be limited by school zoning rules based on the catchment area in which they live. They also provide material for discussions within the school and with the school's partners.

They are based on examination results, individual school careers, the proportion of school-leavers with diplomas, and what becomes of pupils after they have left the school. They make it possible to measure the school's 'added value' because they allow the results obtained to be compared with expected results. In the tables below we take the case of a *lycée*, a school whose essential purpose is to prepare its pupils for the *baccalauréat*, to illustrate these indicators.

Thus, the assessment of the performance of a *lycée* on the basis of its results brings several indicators into play—*baccalauréat* pass rate, *baccalauréat* access rate from the first year of upper secondary education, *baccalauréat* access rate from the second year and proportion of those leaving the *lycée* with a *baccalauréat*—the first three of which make it possible to assess the school's added value in comparison with the figures for the *académie* and for France as a whole. They make no claim to measure the impact of the school as such but make for a more just appreciation of its results.

TABLE 1. List of indicators available to a general and technical *lycée*

Structure of the school: indicators of student population
p1—overall population at start of school year;
p2—pupils present in *lycée* classes at start of school year;
p3—previous schooling of pupils attending the lycée, by level;
p5—level of knowledge of first-year pupils.
Indicators of resources and means
m1—number of timetable hours;
m2—characteristics of teachers;
m3—number of pupils in each course.
Indicators of results
r1—*baccalauréat* pass rate;
r2—*baccalauréat* access rate;
r3—proportion of successful *baccalauréat* candidates among school-leavers;
r4—destination of pupils leaving the *lycée*;
r6—situation of school-leavers.
Indicators of organizational aspects
f1—direction taken by pupils at end of first year;
f2—proportion of timetable hours when pupils are actually being taught;
f3—size of divisions;
f4—provision of teaching-related services;
f5—provision of ancillary services;
f6—changes in composition of teaching staff;
f7—accidents in the school;
f8—status of *lycée* students.
Indicators related to the local context
e1—closeness of relations with economic environment;
e2—data per employment area.

BRINGING OUT THE SCHOOLS' 'ADDED VALUE'

To gauge the real contribution of the *lycée* to the success of its pupils, that is to say its added value, the influence of external factors needs to be eliminated and only that resulting from the school's own action has to be taken into account.

Several factors directly related to the pupil have an impact on academic success. Preliminary studies carried out at the Ministry of Education have emphasized the importance of two factors: the age of pupils and their social background. As the existence of strong correlations between those factors and academic success has been proved, the problem was to measure success in the school while neutralizing the effects of those two criteria.

Apart from their relevance, these criteria were chosen because of their availability in the information systems. The age criterion, for example, comes in handy as a substitute for an academic criterion that is difficult to measure, namely the level of knowledge of pupils starting the first year of *lycée*. It is also well known that educational retardation is an expression of learning difficulties. As for socio-professional category, the findings of several studies have shown the importance of this criterion and its impact on success throughout the school career.

Thus, two expected rates are calculated, one based on all schoolchildren in the *académie* in which the school is situated (the '*académie*-base expected rate') and the other based on all schoolchildren in France (the 'national-base expected rate'). The comparison of these expected rates with actual rates makes it possible to assess the added value and to determine the actual contribution of the school to the success of its pupils in comparison with the success of pupils in similar schools with student populations comparable with those of the *académie* and France as a whole. It is a relative assessment in that it compares the actual success—whether *baccalauréat* passes or access to the *baccalauréat* of first-year pupils—with an imaginary expected success that the school would have obtained if its pupils had had the same results as those observed in an 'average' school in the *académie* and in France as a whole with a similar population and offering the same types of training.

For example, the national average for the *baccalauréat* pass rate in 1999 was 78.4%, but if we take the national average pass rate of candidates of normal age or younger from a very favoured social category, the rate rises to 90.1%. On the other hand, when we look at candidates two or more years behind in their studies and coming from a disadvantaged social category, the average pass rate is 65.2%. Under these conditions, a *lycée* whose average pass rate is 70% and whose candidates are almost all two or more years behind and from disadvantaged social categories could take legitimate satisfaction in the result obtained since, at the national level, the pass rate for students of the same age and social category was only 65.2%. Conversely, a school entering only students of normal age from a very favoured social category, could not be happy with a pass rate of 80% since that rate, although higher than the national average (78.4%), is markedly lower than the national pass rate for students with the same characteristics (90.1%).

It would therefore seem more to the point for a *lycée* to compare its pass rate not with the national average rate but with an expected rate that takes account of the characteristics of its pupils by age and social category; each resulting group would then be compared with the national average pass rate for pupils with the same characteristics (see Table 1). The difference between the two figures serves to measure the added value of the school concerned. If the difference is positive, the *lycée* can reasonably be regarded as having given its pupils more than they would have received if they had attended an—imaginary—school reflecting the national average or the average of the *académie*; this would indicate good performance, while a negative difference would indicate the opposite.

To illustrate these performance indicators, a school has been chosen at random and its results presented in Tables 2, 3 and 4.

TABLE 2. *Baccalauréat* pass rate, by specialization, of a given school

Specialization	Literary	Economic and social	Scientific	Tertiary science and technology	Industrial science and technology	Laboratory science and technology	Overall rate
Gross rate	87	-	85	-	82	82	84
Expected rate (for *académie*)	88	-	83	-	83	78	82
Expected rate (for France)	83	-	79	-	78	80	79
Total number of candidates	39	-	102	-	96	71	308

Note: This table shows that the school concerned obtains an overall *baccalauréat* pass rate of 84%, slightly higher than the expected rates for the *académie* (82%) or for France (79%); its added value is thus positive. However, analysis of the performance of this school should be supplemented by measurements of its access rates in order to determine the true success rate for a full school career (see Table 4).

EVALUATION BASED ON SEVERAL PARAMETERS

If, as mentioned earlier, we seek to measure the 'added value' of a school, it emerges that success in the school-leaving examination, even when compared with an expected rate rather than an unadjusted average rate, cannot be used as a school's sole performance indicator: attention should also be paid to the pupils' whole career in the school and to the proportion leaving the *lycée* with their school-leaving diploma, even if they have had to repeat a grade or grades. The latter rate, ideally 100%, makes it possible among other things to assess the school's ability to offer a 'second chance' thanks to grade repeating that leads to eventual success. We know that this is not always the case, and that, each year, a number of pupils leave school for good without the longed-for diploma (Table 3).

TABLE 3. Proportion of successful *baccalauréat* candidates among school-leavers of a given *lycée*

	School %	*Académie* %	France %
First, second and third years	58	75	69
Third year	95	94	93

Note: This table shows that the proportion of *baccalauréat*-holders among those leaving school at the end of the third year is satisfactory, but is not satisfactory for school-leavers from the first, second and third years taken together.

Let us now look more closely at the educational career of a pupil in a given *lycée*, from entering the school or a given branch of study until he or she leaves having obtained the certificate or diploma originally aimed for, however many years were needed to obtain it. The chances of success, during the pupils' career spent in the same school, are expressed by 'access rates' from the first year of *lycée* to the *baccalauréat* or from the second year (i.e. second year of *lycée* but year of entry into the chosen branch of study) to the *baccalauréat* (Table 4).

The access rate from the first year of *lycée* to the *baccalauréat* is calculated on the basis of the access rate from the first to the second year, the access rate from the second to the third (and final) year, and the access rate from the third year of *lycée* to the *baccalauréat*.

It is arrived at by following an 'imaginary cohort', the calculation being based on *lycée* pupils at all levels in a given year, and on the assumption that the observations for a given year, in terms of access from one level to the next and final success in the *baccalauréat* examination, can be extrapolated to the entire career of a pupil in the school.

For these access rates, as for the *baccalauréat* pass rate, consideration is also given to the expected rates calculated with the characteristics of the student population taken into account. The comparison of those expected rates with actual access rates makes it possible to measure the added value.

TABLE 4. Access rates from the first and second years to the *baccalauréat* for a given *lycée*

	Gross rate (*académie*)	Expected rate (France)	Expected rate		Total number of pupils
First year	50	69	62	First year	374
Second year	80	83	81	Second year	338

Note: This table shows an access rate from first year to *baccalauréat* much lower than the expected rates, but not from the second year.

At all events, it is the cross-referencing of all these indicators of outcomes—success in the *baccalauréat*, access rates and proportion of *baccalauréat*-holders among school-leavers—that gives the best idea of a school's success in relation to the objective of obtaining a school-leaving certificate. Noting the *baccalauréat* pass rate alone, or even compared to an expected rate, would mean failing to take into account the policies of certain schools which turn away pupils they consider unlikely to be able to obtain the diploma aimed for; this could produce very satisfactory pass rates, but at the cost of a policy of selection at an earlier stage that gives little chance to pupils in temporary difficulty or needing more time to attain the requisite level.

Thus, in the case of the *lycée* whose results are set out in the previous three tables, the indicators taken together might suggest a selective policy at the end of the first year, with the elimination of the weakest pupils, resulting—at this price—in satisfactory results in the final examination. Another hypothesis is, however, possible: as can be seen in the first table, the school does not offer 'economic and social' or 'tertiary science and technology' courses of study. That might have led a number of pupils interested in those courses of study to leave the school for quite legitimate reasons at the end of the first year, when the choice has to be made. The low access rate from the first year to the *baccalauréat* would then be more an effect of 'structure' than the result of a policy of selection. At all events, the only way of confirming either of these hypotheses or even checking a third one would be to obtain additional local information.

A system that is clearly useful but not sufficient in itself

The battery of indicators presented here is a crucial component in the development of procedures to assist heads in the running of French secondary schools. The provision of pre-calculated data, along with national and regional cross-references and a software package giving access to these data, is greatly appreciated by school heads, but however essential this system may be, it is not sufficient in itself, since other elements are equally necessary:

- The development of a minimal level of computer skills on the part of school heads is vital for the dissemination and rational use of this set of indicators.
- The development of an evaluation culture: the use, interpretation or mere perusal of indicators requires the acquisition of certain basic concepts and methods that will avert errors of interpretation. The skills of critical appraisal, comparison, crosschecking and postulating of hypotheses may be developed by means of pre-service or in-service training aimed at those responsible for running schools. This is what has been done systematically since the introduction of IPES in 1994, but it should also include 'booster' courses for school heads in need of them.
- Outside assistance and an outside view: this refers to external evaluation, which can provide a very useful complement to the school's internal evaluation. This is the job of the inspectorate. Inspectors can use the IPES indicators to formulate a number of hypotheses which, in any case, will need to be checked by a visit to the school and discussions with its head and the teaching team to cast more light on its operation and the choices made by it.

The experience gained over a period of seven years has highlighted the great importance of the school head's personal involvement: this involvement must clearly be intense, and his or her personal work must be done with conviction if the delicate task of steering schools with the help of these indicators is to be successful. That is why the following two conditions seem of decisive importance:

- The determination to steer a project-based course, primarily on the part of the school head, whose task it is to convince the educational community, especially the teachers, of the effectiveness of pursuing such a course.

- Leadership: the school head has a vital role to play in promoting the use by the school of indicators to facilitate evaluation and management. The head's position gives him or her control over the information, the means of disseminating it and the initiative in using it as he or she wishes. It is up to the head to present it to the members of the educational community, especially the teachers, to analyse it together with them, to steer them towards the definition of assessable objectives, and to assist in devising and subsequently putting into practice educational projects and teaching strategies conducive to achievement of the objectives set. Lastly, it is the head's job to conduct the evaluation that will enable the school to fine-tune, or make radical changes to, its policy.

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that, in keeping with the thinking behind the introduction of this system of indicators, an information centre has recently been set up by the French Ministry of Education. Access is via the Ministry's Intranet network. It includes various sources of data, such as document and decision databases, indicators and directories produced by the central administration. These data are used by all education system administrators. The available tools for evaluation and management include, in addition to the IPES, a 'central management base' (*base central de pilotage*—BCP), 'management tools for regional and *académie*-level educational institutions' (*outils de pilotage des enseignements régionaux et académiques*—OPERA), 'indicators on higher education institutions' (*indicateurs sur les établissements d'enseignement supérieur*—InfoSUP), and 'indicators for steerage from primary to lower secondary school' (*indicateurs pour le pilotage de l'école au collège*—InPEC) the object of which is to improve transition from primary to lower secondary education.

Thus, the whole of the French education system is provided with indicators that supply all the senior staff of its various institutions with objective information to help them carry out their duties in regard to evaluation and management as well as possible.

Notes

1. For the administration of its education system, France is divided into thirty geographical regions known as *académies*, each headed by a rector.
2. *Baccalauréat* pass rates and the school 'league tables' based on them were published annually in *Le Monde de l'éducation* until 1994. However, when the *lycée* performance indicators began to be issued by the Ministry, the press ceased to rank schools solely on the basis of pass rates for the *baccalauréat*.
3. The *lycée* performance indicators can be found on the Internet site http://www.education.gouv.fr/ival. This site is updated in April each year.
4. The first of four years in lower secondary education.
5. The first of three years.
6. The first of two years.

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THE USE OF 'VALUE-ADDED' MEASURES IN SCHOOL EVALUATION: A VIEW FROM ENGLAND

Lesley Saunders

This paper is about the type of measurement of schools' performance that has come to be known as 'value added'. In the first main section, the paper gives an account of the context for value-added approaches in education, and provides some criteria for calculating and presenting value-added measures appropriately. The second half of the paper discusses the implications of a study undertaken to explore how schools actually use value-added information and concludes by suggesting that 'the psychology and sociology of using numbers' need to be better understood.

An overview of 'value-added' approaches

'Value-added' measurement of educational performance is here to stay or else on the way in the education systems of several countries. In the United Kingdom, and more particularly England, for example, the national value-added system—instituted in 1998—at the moment produces information for primary and secondary schools 'to assist schools in looking at their own pupils' progress against the national pic-

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Original language: English

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Until recently, principal research officer at the School Improvement Research Centre, National Foundation for Educational Research. Her main areas of expertise were schools' use of value-added measures of performance, self-evaluation and school improvement. She has written extensively for policy, academic and practitioner audiences and spoken at many national and international conferences. She recently joined the General Teaching Council for England as policy adviser for research and is now engaged in developing a research strategy for the GTC.

ture', based on national curriculum test and public examination results. As soon as it is feasible, the government proposes to include value-added measures in the tables that publish information about the performance of every school in the country. As I argued in a recent report (Saunders, 1999*b*), the introduction of the national value-added system could be seen as the culmination of a decade of sustained and fairly public argument about how to measure the performance of pupils in the nation's schools in a way that sheds light on progress as well as standards.

Measured at the school level, value added is the most accurate way we have at present of calculating how well schools perform with their pupils. If only 'raw' results are used to assess a school's performance, they reveal more about the background of the pupils than about the performance of the school. Value-added measurement works by discounting factors tied into pupils' achievements but unrelated to institutional quality. Such factors include pupils' prior attainment, sex, ethnic group, date of birth, level of special educational need and social disadvantage. These factors—whether correlated positively with performance (as in the case of prior attainment) or negatively (as in the case of social disadvantage)—turn up as empirically verifiable items in study after study.

However, this sharpened focus on more sophisticated ways of evaluating schools' performance—which may have far-reaching consequences for the education system, the schools and their pupils—means that it is crucial to get the calculation, interpretation and uses of 'value-added' data right.

What is the context for 'value added'

The context and rationale for calculating value-added measures of performance have changed dramatically since the 1980s, when 'value added' was regarded as a quasi-technical idea that had strayed into education from economics. Educational 'value added' is one of those terms that comes with an agenda already attached: the agenda in this case being the political preoccupation in the United Kingdom (as in other nations) with standards and quality in education, or rather the lack of quality and/or of deterioration in standards therein and the wish of politicians to get better value for public expenditure. For some time, this agenda has been explicitly attached to the issue of global competitiveness, and the consensus belief that education and training are important levers for economic competitive advantage. For their part, education managers and school principals have often wanted to demonstrate that standards (particularly in their own institutions) have *not* been slipping, that the profession is giving value for money.

One could say that value added was an idea waiting for its time: the ideas and methodological models that lay behind the introduction of value added in education were already well established by the early 1990s. But when value-added approaches began to be talked about outside the circle of educational scholars and statisticians, the then secretary of state for education in England was scathing about what he was convinced were ever more sophisticated ways of 'cooking' schools' results: he wanted to stick with 'raw' ones that were simple to compile and understand. By 1995, political opinion had changed dramatically: the next secretary of state for education (and employment) had been won over to the principle of value added to the extent that she established the framework for a national system. That same year, a research contract was awarded to the Centre for Educational Management (then based at the University of Newcastle), by what was the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA), to design and pilot methods of calculating value added and ways of using the results to assess schools' performance. (See Saunders, 1999*a*, for a fuller discussion of these issues.)

Various methods have been—and continue to be—tested and developed for ways of producing information that can be used to assess the relative effectiveness of different schools or local education authorities (LEAs). See, over the years, the work accomplished by Fitz-Gibbon, Goldstein, Gray, Hutchison, Kendall, Jesson, Mortimore, Nuttall, Sammons, Schagen, Thomas, Tymms and others: for example, in Gray *et al.*, 1986; Raudenbusch and Bryk, 1986; Nuttall *et al.*, 1989; Gray *et al.*, 1990; Tymms, 1990; Schagen, 1991; Fitz-Gibbon and Tymms, 1993; Hutchison, 1993; Mortimore *et al.*, 1994; Gray *et al.*, 1995; Kendall, 1995; Jesson, 1996; Thomas & Mortimore, 1996; Sammons *et al.*, 1997.

How can these measures improve the system?

It is important to realise that collecting and analysing data that can be used for 'value-added' purposes is costly in terms of resource and expertise. (See Goldstein, 1997, for discussion of how far we still have to go in making best use of the techniques.) Many items of standardized performance and background data must be collected, linked to a unique pupil ID and analysed using a statistical technique called multilevel modelling.

The question of whether this is an investment worth making must be answered in terms of the uses to be made of such analyses, and of the quality of the inspectoral/advisory infrastructures to support such usage. The potential uses of value added can be broadly grouped into 'accountability' and 'improvement/development'. Although in principle these are not mutually incompatible, in practice there is usually a pronounced emphasis one way or the other in policy preference and resource allocation.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The main need in a system that emphasizes accountability—and this is often allied with support for the 'marketization' of schools through the unfettered exercise of parental choice—is for clear and simple indicators giving unambiguous information that differentiates between schools. A problem with using value-added analyses for accountability purposes is that they typically show that—on any given indicator—most schools are performing within the range that might be expected given their intake characteristics. Value-added analyses, therefore, cannot sensibly be used to 'rank order' all schools. Indeed, it is hard to make a case for using value-added measures—or any other performance indicators—to arrive at simple definitive statements about schools' effectiveness.

Value-added analyses can be used, however, to identify the 'outliers' or exceptions—i.e. those schools which appear to be performing significantly better or significantly worse than expected. Once identified, these institutions can—assuming the appropriate inspectoral/advisory infrastructures are in place—be further investigated in relation to the quality of teaching methods, climate, leadership, etc. This information could yield insights into the operation of the system as a whole.

IMPROVEMENT/DEVELOPMENT

But perhaps a more important issue is how far are the complexities that have been introduced to the measurement of educational quality by value added justified in what they have contributed to the possibility of raising standards in individual schools? The main need in a system that emphasizes improvement/development is for quite detailed analyses that can compare and contrast, within one school or municipality, the performance over time of pupils in different subject areas, for example, or of different groups of pupils in the same subject. Schools can use these analyses as part of their self-evaluation process to diagnose institutional strengths and weaknesses. In this context, value-added measures can help to pose better and more focused questions about the ways a school is performing with its pupils and to stimulate more informed discussion amongst school staff about the way they organize and deliver their teaching.

But we can hypothesize that to perform this function well, value-added analyses need to be treated as an educational innovation: i.e. actively managed with adequate preparation, support and training for school governors, principals and teachers. Some commentators would add that the analyses must be confidential—i.e. not released into the public domain—in order to realise their potential for developmental objectives.

What are the basic technical features?

A brief summary of points to bear in mind might go as follows:[1]

1. Value-added indicators are an improvement on raw results, to the extent that the latter say a lot more about the intake than about the effectiveness of a school. Value-added analyses attempt to strip away factors that are associated with performance—either positively or negatively—but are not related to institutional quality. These include pupils' prior attainment, sex, ethnic group, date of birth, level of special educational need and social disadvantage. It is not unusual for pupils' prior attainment plus the overall level of social disadvantage in the school to account for as much as 80% of the apparent difference between schools.
2. Any quantitative data—whether raw *or* value added—has the following limitations:

- Quantitative data carries with it a degree of statistical 'uncertainty': calculations based on numerical data can be as much the result of pure chance as of something more 'real', such as the quality of education. Usually, only a few schools can be shown to be performing at levels significantly above or below the norm in statistical terms, on either raw or 'value-added' outcomes.
- Analyses of performance data—because necessarily retrospective—can easily be misleading with regard to current and future performance.
- Academic performance—which is the usual outcome measure used in value-added calculations—is not the only (nor even, according to some educators, the most important) outcome of ten or twelve years of schooling.
- Schools may be 'differentially effective':
  First of all, different outcome measures often give different results: a school that is getting good results if one looks only at higher levels of attainment may be letting down those pupils at the lower end of the attainment range;
  Or, a school may be doing well with some groups of pupils (girls in some ethnic groups, for example) and not others (boys in other ethnic groups); and/or in mathematics but not English.
- The national statistical relationship between, say, test results at the end of primary education and test results at the end of secondary education may change. To maintain their accuracy and relevance, statistical models must be continually monitored by empirical research.

3. Most of this has been obscured by crude 'league table' approaches, however. One of the strengths of value-added measures has been to make educators more aware of the complex and probabilistic nature of performance data.
4. The prerequisites for doing 'value added' well are illustrated in Box 1.

VALUE ADDED IN BRIEF

Value-added analyses:

- Are only as good as the data they are based on;
- Deal in correlations, not causes;

BOX 1. Best practice in calculating value added.

- Data collected at the pupil level on a large and representative sample.
- Outcome measure(s) reflecting all levels of pupil performance.
- Prior attainment measure(s) for each pupil (preferably individual standardized scores), plus items of information about the pupil's background.
- School context factors.
- Multilevel modelling to analyse the data.
- Rigorous quality assurance and quality control procedures.

Source: See: Gray, 1994.

BOX 2: Best practice in providing value added.

- Results of analyses should be given in tabular, graphical and verbal forms for individual schools. These results should show whether the measured differences between schools are statistically significant.
- Wherever possible, results should be given at three stages of analysis: 'raw' results, results adjusted for pupil data (such as prior attainment) and results adjusted for pupil and school context data. Each one of these stages of analysis usually has some insight to offer.
- A minimum of three years' worth of data is needed to establish a trend upward or downward.
- It follows from the above that value-added measurements are not self-evident nor without their limitations. A detailed explanation needs to accompany the analyses.

- Are based on a normative and retrospective model that may not tell us any thing about desirable levels of performance now or in the future;
- Are only one instrument of evaluation;
- Should be used as a screening device, not a definitive assessment;
- Rigorous quality assurance and quality control procedures.
- Provide no right answers or quick fixes to school improvement;
- Are therefore necessary but not sufficient for understanding how well schools are performing;

An important corollary of all this is that the 'high stakes' use of value-added analyses is not supportable, any more than is that of crude league tables. Value-added measures would not make what is essentially an inappropriate use of performance data more acceptable just because they use better methods of calculation. By themselves, they cannot be validly used to make definitive judgements about the effectiveness of a school, still less of a single department or class or teacher. (See the article by Visscher & Karsten in *Prospects*, vol XXXI, no. 2 for an excellent discussion of the uses of school performance indicators; and Goldstein & Myers, 1996, for a well-argued rationale for a code of ethics governing the use of performance indicators.)

The remainder of this paper discusses the findings of a small study that explored the uses of value-added information by schools. These findings serve both to illustrate some of the issues raised above and point to some challenges to our understanding of what happens to 'evidence' in an institutional context.

Schools' use of value-added data

WHAT IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY?

If the national emphasis in valued added (and performance data generally) is now on supporting and improving the quality of teaching and learning, what kinds of evidence do we have on the ways in which school staff do actually use value-added data and what does it show? What kinds of professional development and support are necessary? What capacity does value added have for raising pupil performance?

For staff at the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), the guidance and in-service training aspect of the value-added work we undertake has been particularly instructive. Quite rightly, the focus of work in the school effectiveness and value-added fields has tended to be methodological accuracy—from conceptualizing the statistical model appropriately to collecting the right data in the right form. What use headteachers and staff made of the analyses was something to which we perhaps did not initially give full enough consideration. We were not alone in this. The guidance given by national agencies on the use of data for target-setting and raising standards has in the past been premised on assumptions about key factors, such as the transparency of data and the part played by the internal organization and culture of schools. This second section has something to say about what might be called the 'user end' of the process.

To begin with, we need to be aware that not all school staff may have been able to acquire an accurate understanding of value added. Maw (1999) argues that the press coverage of value added has largely been in the context of publishing the controversial tables of school performance, and has not given a clear and coherent message concerning the measurement of value added.

There are certainly indications that the use of value-added data by school staff is not a straightforward matter of applying 'evidence' to practice. The NFER recently funded a small-scale qualitative study to explore in a preliminary fashion, through interview, observation and documentary analysis, the uses to which QUASE[3] data was being put in nine secondary schools in different local education authorities.

The first point to make about the study is that the circumstances were apparently highly conducive to schools making use of value-added information, in that:

- The schools—or rather, the headteachers/governors—had commissioned and paid for the analyses (rather than having the information imposed on them);
- The information was of direct relevance for the individual school (as distinct from information about national data for which they would have to generate their own comparisons);
- The information was accessible in the sense that the report was sent to the school (as distinct from the school having to seek out information, for example, from the Internet);
- The information was important for the (policy-driven) focus on performance.

The study found that in some schools the data was being disseminated widely and used constructively. This was more likely to happen if staff had opportunities for constructing collective meanings through discussion and dialogue about the data. Nonetheless, despite the presumably favourable pre-conditions in these schools, a variety of challenges and difficulties seemed to be in the way of at least some staff in all the schools using value-added data to its fullest extent and for developmental purposes. Looking at the fieldwork evidence in one way, the possible reasons for this can be surmised to be:

- Lack of structures for dissemination of the information;

- Lack of time for staff to read and interpret the information;
- Lack of competence/confidence amongst staff to understand the information;
- Lack of inclination by staff to spend time or acquire competence in using an instrument whose helpfulness to their work was not immediately obvious (*'it tells us nothing new'*);
- Lack of belief in performance data as an aid to pedagogical excellence.

These are the kinds of conclusions which a typical evaluation might draw and would suggest that value-added analyses have not (yet) played a large role as information for school improvement. But, plainly, this interpretation constitutes something of a deficit model. What else might the outcomes be telling us? What factors and forces might be at work?

To begin with empirical evidence: The study found that only where all or most of the following conditions were present were schools likely to be making active use of value-added data. The five factors were:

- Active support for value added by senior management;
- 'Championing' of QUASE data by a senior member of staff;
- The incentive provided by the school's overall 'relative effectiveness'; briefly, schools which had the greatest incentive to use value-added data were those doing poorly in league tables but well in terms of progress made with pupils;
- At least three years' participation in QUASE;
- Previous exposure of at least some staff to guidance on the interpretation of QUASE. (These factors are discussed in more detail in Saunders & Rudd, 1999.)

But I would go further and say that the evidence from the study—which, although small-scale, supports and extends the evidence from one or two other studies in the field (e.g. Williamson & Fitz-Gibbon, 1990; Williamson et al., 1992; Wikeley, 1998)—suggests that there are a number of critical issues pertaining to the use of value-added performance data that deserve to be more widely understood. These can be expressed as follows:

Value-added data carries a particular symbolism or 'charge' for many school staff at present. As many interviewees in the NFER study made clear, value-added data is seen as part of a rapidly moving policy agenda, about scrutinizing and making accountable school, departmental and teacher performance. Scrutiny of results for accountability purposes, at national, local education authority, institutional and sub-institutional levels, is likely to be strengthened, at least in the short term. Performance data generally may be impartial in intention, but can rarely be perceived as neutral in effect. Value-added data in particular is complex, relatively new and often has 'high stakes'. It is probably not possible for any such data to be perceived and used in a way that wholly ignores—or remains unshaped by—this context.

In any case, data do not speak for themselves. Data depend on a series of prior decisions about *what* has been measured and *how* it has been measured, decisions that necessarily involve value judgements as well as complex technical ones. These are not always transparent or understood. Partly because of this, some staff are unduly sceptical about performance data to the point of wanting to dismiss it; others are perhaps over-optimistic about what it can tell them. In the NFER study, where value-added data was utilized well—i.e. as part of 'intelligence-gathering' about the school—it was often 'championed' by someone who understood and was interested in the data and was prepared to mediate the technical aspects for colleagues; moreover, the data was used in conjunction with other information, both numerical and qualitative, to initiate discussion.

Value-added analyses are evidently an intervention that needs to be managed. In the NFER study, senior managers in some schools were not sure how to make best use of the analyses, and let departmental heads 'do their own thing'; this seemed to lead to inertia in some departments and 'over-use' of data in others. Other head teachers, especially those who had been using the data over several years, were more confident about what they wanted to achieve by the strategic use of data. Even so, there were still conspicuous differences in the use made by different departments in the same school. And so the question arises, is it not sometimes just as important to explore and understand why schools, or departments within schools, are *not* using value-added data?

External input in the form of in-service training on value-added data seems to be a necessary prerequisite. In the NFER study, the input of previous training/support was one factor associated with schools' use of data. The study additionally suggested that the extent to which schools made use of the data was much in accordance with what might have been expected from their 'relative effectiveness', i.e. according to whether they had a strong extrinsic incentive to use it or not. From a policy perspective, this raises the question of whether further external encouragement and support from, for example, the local education authority may be needed. It also reinforces the idea that training and support that takes account of individual school contexts is necessary in order for the potential of the data to be better understood and utilized.

The meanings of data are socially constructed. The NFER study suggests that the meaning of value-added data emerges from the *interaction* among:

- The actual 'numbers on the page';
- The politicized significance which performance data as a species of information currently possesses;
- What individual staff bring—often implicitly—to the discussion in terms of their own skills and knowledge about performance data, their values and attitudes towards schooling and teaching, their expectations and assessments of their pupils, their feelings about their place within the hierarchy of the school, and so forth.

This last point in turn poses the question: Does value-added data sometimes act as a *locus* for conversations staff would like to have, or anxieties they want to express, about their professional work and its value in the organization? If so, then who controls (access to) value-added data and for what perceived purposes the data is being used are central rather than secondary questions. It has to be said that the use (or lack of use) to which value-added data are put seems to follow the existing contours of the style of management. It is not at all evident that the introduction of data necessarily and of itself brings about a culture supportive of systematic self-review and planning for improvement; it seems rather the other way round, that the culture determines what use is made of the data. We might then want to ask, how well does the 'champion' or sponsor of value-added data manage and mediate the political and ethical as well as the technical aspects for colleagues?

One English commentator (Dudley, 1999*a, b*) has some pertinent suggestions for helping teachers to deal with data. (In his case, he was discussing the use of pupil survey data rather than value-added data—but the general principles hold good.) He says that the factors that promoted an action-oriented response were found in the way the data were presented and the feedback managed. He notes that key issues within the data could easily be lost and that the discussion could be side-tracked or brought to a halt by staff focusing on variables over which the school had little control, such as home background.

Factors associated with positive, action-orientated responses were:

- The availability of comparative data from schools felt not to be dissimilar;
- Preparation for reading the data;
- Prompts which focused discussion of pupil data on teaching, learning and issues that the school could influence and developed speculation skills in teachers;
- Some prior groundwork done by the discussion leader in identifying possible improvement strategies to feed into the discussion so that people did not feel 'cornered' by the data;
- The introduction of ground rules into the discussion to ensure that apparent good news or reactions to perceived external influences such as home background were sufficiently challenged;
- A school where speculation and reflection were promoted among staff;
- A feeling that the process generating the data was valid and could be trusted. (Amalgamation of Dudley, 1999*a, b.*)

In view of all this, we may well feel that 'the psychology and sociology' of using data need to be better understood and managed. The force of Dudley's (1999*a*, p. 97) claim that *'taking account of the emotional issues in effective use of data is vital if it is to be used with sustained effect'* seems a crucial lesson to be drawn from the evidence. As well as better preparation for and management of value-added data, I think it is legitimate to argue that a better understanding is needed of what kinds of knowledge teachers feel moved and motivated by, and of which they can eventually feel ownership.

This is particularly important because a great deal is being said currently about the importance of 'relevant' research/data/information/evidence for both policy and practice (see, for example, Hargreaves, 1996). I said above that data do not speak for themselves: it is not self-evident. I think it is not going too far to say that the outcomes of the NFER study raise questions about the self-evidence of 'relevance'. Bird et al. (1998, p. 35) define relevance in educational research as consisting of 'importance' and 'contribution to existing knowledge'. If we accept this definition, the NFER study suggests that, so far as schools and teachers are concerned, we should then ask 'important for what and for whom?' and 'knowledge of what and for whom?'

In other words, it cannot be assumed that the policy context of raising standards—in which value-added data as a form of information should be situated—constitutes a necessary and sufficient definition of importance as far as teachers are concerned: indeed, they may feel dominated and demotivated by such policy initiatives. What teachers may then evince is 'compliance with' rather than 'ownership of'. Nor can it be assumed that value-added analyses of performance constitute the kind of knowledge which is felt by teachers to contribute something worthwhile to what they already know or believe about the connection between pupils, progress and pedagogy. The convictions that some teachers and educationists hold about this connection (and from which a scepticism towards value-added data could imaginably ensue) can be encapsulated in the words of Stenhouse (1975): *'Education as induction into knowledge is successful to the extent that it makes the behavioural outcomes of the students unpredictable.'*

I accordingly wish to speculate that the NFER study points us in the direction of saying that why and how teachers engage with some kinds of knowledge and not others is bound up with:

- Their assessment of the perceived costs in relation to potential benefits of engaging with complex and difficult subjects like value added, when there is already a large workload outside as well as within the classroom for teachers;
- Their construction of professional identity, particularly as this concerns:

  The theories (albeit sometimes implicit) they have developed about their own learning as teachers;

  Their values-base: what they think it is most important for young people to be able to accomplish in their education;

  Their particular institutional culture and its micro-politics.

Gray (2000, p. iv) even seems to insinuate that the notion of 'relevance' may itself be irrelevant to teachers' learning: *'There are hardly any short-cuts—when it comes to learning how to change few teachers seem to be prepared to let others do the thinking for them'.*

These ideas suggest that the deficit model I presented above does not do justice to the professional milieu of schools in terms either of teachers' cognitive processes and their theories about those processes, or of the institutional and political contexts in which they individually and collectively construct their cognition. And this in turn confirms the reasonableness of the frequently heard proposition that school improvement cannot be secured by 'quick fixes'. Policy-makers may not be able to legislate for this, but they should understand, acknowledge and respect it.

Notes

1. This section is based on an earlier article: L. Saunders and S. Thomas, Into an uncertain world, *Times educational supplement* (London), no. 4280, 10 July 1998, p. 26.
2. A fuller account of the findings of the NFER study can be found in Saunders, 2000.
3. QUASE—quantitative analysis for self-evaluation—is the value-added analysis service for secondary schools provided by the NFER. See Box 3.

BOX 3: Work in value-added analyses at the National Foundation for Educational Research

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) has an established reputation in various aspects of educational research directly relevant to 'value added': notably, in educational test development, statistical analyses of performance, and assessment of school effectiveness. We have been undertaking 'value-added' work over the last decade in partnership with a number of schools and local education authorities around the country.

Our programme comprises two distinct but related types of work: evaluations and research studies sponsored by central government agencies or the NFER itself; and services to schools and local education authorities.

Two large-scale evaluations of national initiatives are currently being undertaken for central government:

- The evaluation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Projects (autumn 1996 to summer 2000);
- The evaluation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies (spring 1999 to autumn 2001).

Both evaluations involve measuring progress made by pupils over time from a 'baseline' measure at the beginning of the initiative. Progress measures are calculated in terms of changes in standardized scores measured using specially designed tests of literacy and numeracy. In each case, contextual data has been collected at pupil and school level to support sophisticated statistical analyses so that valid comparisons of the progress made by different groups of pupils may be made. Detailed feedback to schools on their pupils' test results and progress scores is a key component.

Another example of such work is the collection and analysis, for a large national sample of pupils in 1998, 1999 and 2000, of the results of optional tests taken by pupils in years three, four and five in primary schools. The aim of this work is to provide the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) with national measures of performance on these tests and to identify and investigate any variation in performance by different groups of pupils. Participating schools have been provided with detailed reports of their pupils' performance each year, including:

- Levels achieved on the optional tests in relation to national norms;
- Comparative performance of different groups of pupils on the optional tests, e.g. of boys compared with girls;
- Progress made by pupils since the statutory national curriculum assessments at the end of key stage one in comparison with the pattern of progress in the national sample.

The response to these reports has been very favourable and schools appear to find the information helpful for tasks related to monitoring, planning and target-setting.

Following consultation with local education authorities and the QCA, the NFER is now intending to provide an analysis service, on the lines described above, to interested schools on a cost recovery basis. A question-by-question analysis of their pupils' responses to the mathematics optional tests can be purchased by schools as part of the service: this generates a report linking test results to the various strands of the National Numeracy Strategy, and is intended as an aid to curriculum planning for the forthcoming academic year.

Other commissioned work in the general area of 'value-added' measurement includes the development of baseline assessment for pupils entering primary school.

The NFER has also for some time provided services which provide value-added analyses for secondary schools which measure their performance in the light of key contextual factors, such as the prior attainment and socio-economic background of their pupils. The NFER's approach:

- Uses data already collected by LEAs/schools;
- Provides easy-to-grasp quantitative analysis which tells LEAs and schools how well they are doing—on a range of key outcome indicators—against norms derived from a large number of schools and pupils;
- Gives expert guidance at each stage of the exercise, from compiling data to interpreting and acting on the results;
- Helps professional practitioners carry out more focused reviews and self-evaluations, particularly for the purposes of target-setting.

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SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION IN THE NETHERLANDS: DEVELOPMENT OF THE ZEBO-INSTRUMENTATION

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Introduction

Traditionally schools have had considerable autonomy in the Netherlands. In the recent 'Quality Law' it is laid down that schools themselves are responsible for the quality of education they provide and the pursuance of a quality policy to ensure its improvement. It has also been decreed that all schools develop a system of quality assurance. Schools are encouraged to carry out school self-evaluation, without providing detailed formats on how to go about this.

In this context, where a strongly developed public educational support structure is a significant factor, there is a broad supply of approaches and tools for school self-evaluation. Results of an inventory of these approaches and tools indicated, among others, weaknesses in the research technical quality of many of the available instruments. Three organizations in the education support structure, the former Foundation of Educational Research (SVO), the Foundation for Curriculum Development (SLO) and the Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO), joined forces in stimulating the development of a more scientifically based instrumentation of school self-evaluation in primary education. The result was a collaborative research project among CITO, OCTO, the research institute attached to the Faculty of Education of the University of Twente, and SLO, aimed at an integrated instrumentation of school self-evaluation for primary schools, called ZEBO (self-evaluation in primary education). The qualification 'integrated' refers to the fact that different types and approaches to school self-evaluation and monitoring educational quality are being combined. These various approaches also have distinct theoretical and disciplinary backgrounds, which are synthesized in this project. Briefly stated, the joint instrument consists of a pupil-monitoring part that depends heavily on psychometric theory and central issues of adaptive instruction (ZEBO-PM), an assessment of the educational content covered with central concepts of curriculum planning and curriculum evaluation at its background (ZEBO-CC), and the measurement of school process indicators, with school effectiveness and school-improvement modeling as its conceptual background (ZEBO-PI).

This article provides general information on the total integrated project in the Dutch context and more detailed information on one of the three elements: the measurement of school process indicators (ZEBO-PI). Section two describes the specific Dutch history and context of the trend towards school performance evaluation, feedback and improvement. In section three the basic ideas and the strategy behind the total project are presented in general, while section four focuses on ZEBO-PI. This section describes in more detail the content of the instruments, the feedback system, and the support schools receive in interpreting and using the feedback information. In section five the results of the studies on the usage of feedback information are presented. It provides information on the extent of the use, interpretation problems, assimilation of the information, actions undertaken, preferences and tensions. The final section contains recommendations for the future.

The Dutch context

In the Netherlands schools have a free choice about the principles on which they are based and in the way they organize their teaching (Ministry of Education, Culture & Sciences, 1999, Van Oijen in Solomon, 1998, Hendriks, Doolaard, Bosker, 2001).

This freedom, guaranteed under article twenty-three of the Constitution, results in a variety of public and private (but government-dependent) school-types. This traditional autonomy in the pedagogical domain, before long, was not matched by a similar degree of freedom in the domain of educational finance and the working conditions of the teaching force. However, from the 1980s onwards, further decentralization has been initiated. In 1993 the Ministry of Education and Sciences and the organizations of governing bodies of the schools agreed upon more autonomy for the schools in the domains of administration and finance, and on decentralization of some tasks to the municipalities.

On 1 August 1998, the law concerning the quality policy (the Quality Act) went into effect. In this law it is laid down that schools themselves are responsible for the quality of education they provide and the pursuance of a quality policy to ensure its improvement. It has also been decreed that all schools develop a system of quality assurance. The law states that the school is required to develop three policy documents: a school plan, a school prospectus, and an arrangement for complaints (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences, 1995).

The school plan outlines the policy of the school on the quality of education and the school improvement activities for the next four years. It has to include the policy on educational matters, staffing and internal quality assurance. These are the only three compulsory elements. Other topics may be incorporated at the school's own discretion. Next to the function of being an integral, internal policy document, the school plan has the function of an accountability document to the inspectorate.

The school prospectus contains information on the objectives of the school, the educational activities and the results achieved. It is a public accounting of schools to parents and pupils, it gives them the opportunity to enter a dialogue with the school; it enables them to compare schools and it helps them to choose the most suitable school. Both the school plan and school prospectus have to be updated every four years.

The school plan, school prospectus and arrangement for complaints have to be regarded as a means to an end. Together with other means, they could stimulate more systematic quality assurance. They could promote dialogue within the school and between the school and the environment. The overall idea is that, more than in the past, parents and pupils get the opportunity to affect the quality of education (VVO, 1998*a*, 1998*b*; WVO, 1998).

During the past few years, in connection with the shift in educational policy, external evaluation by the inspectorate shifted from a legalistic supervision to a more substantive educational monitoring, based upon evaluation criteria and standards developed by the inspectorate itself. In primary education the developments have led to an adapted approach of supervision, consisting of regular supervision and integral supervision (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 1999).

In regular supervision the inspectorate studies the school's results and a number of important quality characteristics relevant to the teaching/learning process. In addition, the inspectorate evaluates the school plan and the school prospectus. School visits also are conducted to supplement the analysis of documents. In general, a school-visit within regular supervision lasts for one day. After the visit the main findings are presented in a report.

If the regular supervision reveals that problems or the potential for problems exist, integral supervision will be carried out. If, on the basis of this integral supervision, improvements are necessary, then the school will be invited to draw up and implement a plan of action. Depending on the progress, an intensified tailored supervision will be carried out.

Primary education has no final examination in the Netherlands. However, about 80% of primary schools use a criterion-based assessment test in the final grade that is primarily meant to facilitate the choice of one of the secondary school types. Primary schools in the Netherlands are used to standardized achievement tests, as about 70% of the schools use pupil-monitoring systems for purposes of diagnosing the progress of individual pupils. The most frequently used pupil monitoring system and final-grade-test are developed by CITO, one of the partners in ZEBO.

The development and rationale of ZEBO

As described in the previous section, the general political climate in the Netherlands can be seen as 'mildly supportive' of the further development of school self-evaluation. The providers, available methods and tools for self-evaluation are a reflection of the Dutch education support structure on the one hand, and a precursor of the 'quality care business' in the education sector on the other. Both orientations have a more 'social engineering' background in that they are grounded in empirical analytic design and evaluation methodology. Evaluation studies on school self-evaluation approaches, funded by the Ministry of Education, noted a general lack of attention for the reliability and validity of instruments for school self-evaluation (Cremers-van Wees et al., 1996*a* and *b*; Hendriks, 2000).

The initiation of the ZEBO-project is to be seen as a direct consequence of these evaluation studies. At the same time, the more empirically analytically inclined branch of the Dutch education support structure, particularly CITO and SVO, were interested in making their mark on school self-evaluation. The result was a collaborative research project among CITO, OCTO and SLO. The project started in September 1995.

In the most general sense the instrumentation of school self-evaluation in primary education should enable schools to assess their own quality. According to the school improvement literature, the crux of change resides in the feelings of teachers exposed to change (Fullan, 1991). How individuals interpret what change means to them is crucial in the process of transforming change into progress. Therefore, a change initiative from within the school is more likely to be successful than imposed initiatives because teachers themselves first experience a 'deficiency'. Regular self-evaluation can help schools to detect these deficiencies and to monitor current improvement initiatives. Experiencing successes during and as a result of improvement initiatives results in a sense of mastery, accomplishment and professional growth that will influence future change processes and increase the change capacity of a school. In this light, the quality assessment can serve three major purposes:

- To provide basic information about school functioning for quality maintenance and school improvement,
- To provide a starting point for further analysis and diagnosis on specific points of school functioning, and
- To provide a basis for informing relevant audiences about school functioning and improvement.

In order to offer schools the possibility to judge the quality of their education in a reliable, valid and efficient manner, the instrumentation of school self-evaluation should meet a number of criteria that mainly stem from educational literature:

- Pupil achievement measures should be the backbone of the instrument. The educational outcomes should be measured in such a way that allows a close monitoring of pupil progress during the (primary) school career;
- Input data concerning pupil background characteristics, like socio-economic status and initial achievement, should be used to construct 'value-added' outcome measures;
- Process indicators, including those concerning the content that is covered, should be used to provide ideas and 'hunches' as to what accounts for certain patterns in value-added outcomes;
- The use of the instrumentation should not lead to an additional burden the schools. If possible, data should be used that are already available at the school, such as systems or programmes to store educational results;
- Users should be enabled to make judgements that are scientifically meaningful, without complicating these by the use of statistical procedures;
- A school should be enabled ultimately to make comparisons with other schools (Moelands & Ouborg, 1995).

Furthermore, the instrumentation should be as flexible as possible. If desirable and possible, schools should be enabled to use the parts of the instrumentation according to their own information needs. Finally, the instrumentation should be user-friendly, lead to results that are easy to interpret, take up less time and make use of the possibilities of the communication and information technology.

Box 1 outlines the possible uses schools can make of the envisaged integrated instrument. This is done by listing the type of evaluative conclusions that schools are able to draw when the instrument has been used over a period of five years and when external reference information is available.

BOX 1. Using school effectiveness as a knowledge base for self-evaluation in Dutch schools.

A. Are attainment levels in basic subjects improving or declining over time? (within schools, within cohorts 'raw score' comparisons)
B. Is the school's effectiveness improving or declining over time? (as A, using adjusted, value-added outcomes)
C. Is the school's effectiveness up to standard from year to year? (comparative analysis on value-added outcomes)
D. What can be concluded about teacher effectiveness by examining average progress-scores of particular cohort grade-level combinations? (within schools, between cohorts and between grades analysis on progress scores)
E. Is the school differentially effective for certain sub-groups of pupils? (e.g. comparing high and low SES-pupils)
F. How do patterns of differential effectiveness develop over time?
G. Do amounts of content covered in basic subjects increase or decrease over time?
H. How do the school's content-covered levels compare to external referents? (differentiation according to grade-levels and cohorts)
I. Can changes in effectiveness be attributed to variation in content covered? (analyses per subject, grade-level and cohorts)
J. Similar questions as G, H and I for other process indicators on school and classroom functioning.

Source: Scheerens, 1995.

The project was aimed at providing primary schools with instrumentation with which they themselves could evaluate the education results, collect data on pupil background characteristics and evaluate the curriculum content covered and (other) relevant process characteristics (Scheerens, 1995). Although 'integration' is one of the guidelines of ZEBO, the connections that can be made between certain elements of the overall instrument are closer than of other combinations. For instance, achievement and prior achievement data have been combined into value-added indicators or progress-scores. But there is a looser association between achievement indicators and process-indicators, as will be shown in the next paragraph.

During the project each institute developed their own part of the instrumentation (i.e. CITO developed the part on output measures and input indicators, SLO and CITO the instrumentation on content covered, and OCTO the instrumentation on the other process characteristics). The progress was discussed on a regular basis. The project finished in August 2000. The progress and the results of the project are described in an interim report (Engelen et al., 1997) and a final report (Moelands et al., 2000).

Content, procedure, feedback and support

CONTENT OF ZEBO-PI

The development of ZEBO-PI took place over almost five years. It started in 1995 with a study of literature on school effectiveness, school improvement, and performance indicators and ended in August 2000 after a final test in a representative sample of 123 schools in the Netherlands.

The rationale adopted in the choice of process variables for ZEBO-PI was to select those variables that, in research, have been shown to be associated with relatively high 'value-added' achievement. From the literature, a set of most relevant process factors has been obtained. Next, available instruments to measure process indicators and methods for school-diagnosis were compared:

- To capture the operational core that is usually mentioned in the reviews of school effectiveness research; and
- To get insight into the actual conceptual contents of complex constructs like 'educational leadership' and 'high expectations for pupils' achievement' (see also Scheerens & Bosker, 1997).

The inventory has led to a broad range of components within factors. At the operational level it was revealed that there is little agreement on the substance of key factors that are supposed to determine school effectiveness. To check whether they would recognize these factors and components in practice, the factors and components were presented to primary school leaders and teachers.

Then instruments had to be selected or constructed to measure the variables. The idea of the instrumentation is self-reporting and judgement by 'consumers'. So, double measures are taken: At the school level, school management provides information using self-reports and are also judged by teachers; and at the classroom level, teachers provide information using self-reports and are also judged by their pupils. Three instruments, all questionnaires, are developed: one for the school management and the teachers, one for the pupils of grade three (ages 6-7) and one for the pupils of grades four through eight (ages 7-12). The questionnaire for pupils of grade three is an adapted version of the questionnaire for the pupils of grades four through eight. Adaptation includes reduction of the possible answers ('true' and 'not true' instead of 'true', 'a bit true' and 'not true'), no negatively formulated statements and reduction of the number of items.

Table 1 shows an overview of the selected process variables and the level at which information is collected.

Box 2 gives examples of items of the pupil as well as the teacher questionnaire concerning classroom climate. In the ZEBO-questionnaires, classroom climate is related to discipline during lessons, for example: use of clear rules, keeping down noise levels, emphasizing that pupils listen well to each other and consequent application of disciplinary rules.

All instruments meet the criteria of reliability, i.e. the scales are consistent on both the individual and the aggregated level. Reliability on the aggregated level is an important issue because of the construction of double measures, described in this section.

TABLE 1. Selected process variables and level of measurement

Process variable	Information collected by		
	School management	Teachers	Pupils
School level			
- Achievement orientation/high expectations	X	X	X
- Educational leadership	X	X	
- Staff development	X	X	
- Pupil care; measures that enable the realisation of inclusive education	X	X	
CONSENSUS AND COHESION AMONG STAFF:			
- Frequency and content of formal staff meetings with the school management	X	X	
- Frequency and content of informal meetings among teachers (co-operation)	X	X	
SCHOOL CLIMATE:			
- Relationships between staff	X	X	
- Relationship: the role of the school management	X	X	
- Workload	X	X	
CLASSROOM LEVEL			
- Structured instruction		X	X
- Adaptive instruction			X
- Time on task			X
- Monitoring of pupils' progress		X	
- Pupil care; special care for high and low achievers		X	
- Classroom climate		X	X
- Relationships between pupils			X
- Support from the teacher and relationship between teacher and pupil			X

Source: Moelands et al., 2000.

BOX 2. Example of items of the pupil questionnaire variable 'Classroom climate'

Most pupils listen well when the teacher is talking	In the classroom I am able to work quietly
☐ true	☐ true
☐ a bit true	☐ a bit true
☐ not true	☐ not true

Example of items of the teacher questionnaire variable 'Classroom climate'

To what extent do you underwrite the following statements concerning the working climate in your classroom?

	Totally disagree	**Slightly disagree**	**Slightly agree**	**Totally agree**
I take care that pupils do not disturb each other during their work	☐	☐	☐	☐
I use clear classroom rules	☐	☐	☐	☐

Source: Moelands et al., 2000.

Without further elaboration, conclusions on the validity are mixed and in line with other studies in educational effectiveness. Within the groups of respondents various variables correlate with each other, so variables measure to a certain extent the similar concepts. Exception is achievement orientation/high expectations measured by pupils. This variable correlates negatively or not with the other variables on pupil level. In general, double measures do not correlate higher with each other than with other variables, which means that they measure different concepts or that different respondents do not agree on the measured concept. Exception is the measurement of relationships between the staff measured by school management and by teachers. And finally, cognitive pupil progress is only related to time on task (language and arithmetic), adaptive instruction (arithmetic), and classroom climate (language).

PROCEDURE

At each participating school a contact was designated by means of a letter and a 'folder'. After a first short phone call, this person was visited by a research-assistant of the university who explained the procedure of the investigation and obtained agreement on the implementation of the self-evaluation. To avoid 'coloured' responses as much as possible, it was a prerequisite that, when the pupils fill in the questionnaire, their own teacher was not in the class. In order to meet this prerequisite, participating schools had the choice to switch teachers or to make use of the help of the research-assistant. To diminish the burden for the schools, it was decided to include in each phase only the pupils of a few grades in the data-collection. The questionnaires were sent back to the university, where data-entry, data-analysis and preparation of the feedback took place.

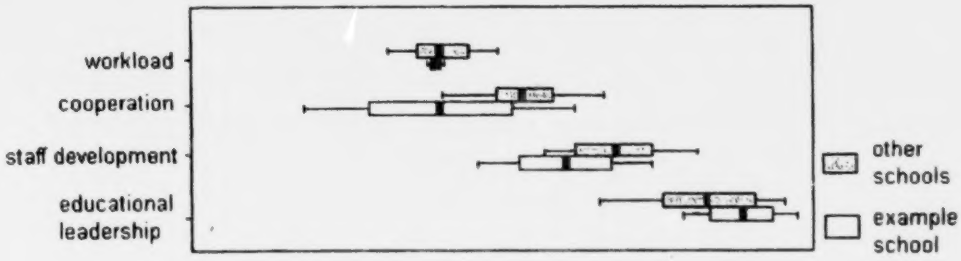
FEEDBACK AND SUPPORT

The main principle of the feedback is based on the comparison of school and classroom scores to national averages. Two kinds of feedback reports were prepared: a school report for the whole school with information based on the school leader and teacher questionnaire, and a classroom report with information based on the pupil questionnaire and the teacher questionnaire. The classroom reports were sent to the individual teachers; the school report to the school management. Whether these class reports are also used on school level depends on the school itself.

The schools did not receive personal support in interpreting the information. Schools could phone the university for help with interpretation, but this happened rarely.

Both school and classroom reports begin with an introduction and suggestions about the use of the information. Both reports contain graphs as well as textual descriptions of the graphs. In addition, the school report contains information about the scores on the individual items of the topics (i.e. the mean scores of the school and the deviation within the total group of schools). The school report does not provide information on the individual teachers; the classroom reports do not provide information on individual pupils. The way the ZEBO-project feeds back information is illustrated in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1. Example graph about the school as a whole and textual description



EXAMPLE TEXTUAL DESCRIPTION

From the school overview it appears that teachers from the example school in comparison with teachers from other schools are above-average positive about the educational leadership at their school. The workload compared with other schools is below average and all teachers agree with this (see width of white bar). The scores for staff development are somewhat lower than those of other schools. From the school overview we can see that the average score on co-operation at the example school is very low and that the teachers have divers opinions about this subject (see width of white bar).

Source: Moelands et al., 2000.

On the basis of Australian experiences, the results are graphically presented in so called 'box and whisker' plots. The central point of the 'box and whisker' plot is the mean, i.e. in the white box the mean of the school or classroom, in the black box the national mean. The utmost left and right points reflect the tenth and ninetieth percentile, the lower and upper limits of the box the twenty-fifth and seventy-fifth percentile.

When the areas of the school (or classroom) 'box and whisker' plot and the national 'box and whisker' plot between the most extreme points do not overlap, there is a clear significant difference between the school (or classroom) mean and the national mean. When the boxes are to the right or the left of the national mean, there is 'some' indication for difference. In all the other cases there are no significant differences between school and national means. The 'width' of the bars indicates the variability between the teachers (in the school report) or pupils (in the classroom report). The wider the bars the more variation exists.

The textual description contains two kinds of comparisons. In the first place the results of the school (or classroom) are being compared with the national results. In this case the text serves as an explanation of the plots. Secondly, in the school report the scores of the teacher are being compared with the score of the school management. In the classroom report this comparison is also made, although this concerns a limited number of scales (i.e. only the scales 'structured instruction' and 'classroom climate' of the teacher questionnaire and the scales 'the lessons' and 'working climate' of the pupil questionnaire).

In case there is a statistically significant difference between the scores of the teachers and school management in respect of pupils and classroom teacher, this is explained in the report. The report only states whether there is a significance and not in which direction the difference is, i.e. whether teachers or school management, for example, have rated a particular issue higher or lower. Such differences are frequently encountered and can be seen as a starting point for internal consultation and debate.

In addition, at the request of the schools, in the school report, feedback has also been provided at the individual item level. For that, the school average item scores are numerically compared with the 80% confidence interval around the national mean for each scale. In the explanation, it is mentioned that if the school mean on an item is outside this interval, it really differs from the national mean.

The usage of the feedback

The utility of the instrumentation and the feedback reports is evaluated in two steps. First, together with the feedback reports, all 123 participating schools received an evaluation form with questions about the content and usage of the feedback reports of the school and the individual classes; 76% of the schools returned the form.

Secondly, more in-depth, detailed information was obtained by telephone interviews among ten schools. These interviews were conducted in April 2000; i.e. six months after sending back the classroom reports and nine months after the school report. In most cases the respondents were the school leader or deputy school leader. In addition, at one or two schools the interviews took place with the internal support teacher.[1] The results are presented below.

Of the schools that returned the evaluation form, 95% recognized the results presented in the school report and found the information fed back (both graphic and textual) relevant, complete and easy to interpret. Eight schools were less enthusiastic about the completeness of the feedback. In their eyes the feedback was too rough, the conclusions too limited, and the discrepancies between teachers and school management not sufficiently explained. In addition, quite a few schools indicated that, although the information presented was not always new, the self-evaluation and feedback were very valuable in themselves. It has led to more or less structured discussions about the aims and direction of the school, the policy and the actions for improvement. From the interviews it appears that when analysing the school report, most schools focussed their attention first to the graphic presentation, i.e. the score of the school in comparison with the national means and the distribution of the scores (width of the bar). Afterwards, the scores on individual items were analysed.

In general, there was less enthusiasm about the classroom reports. Although almost 80% of the respondents indicated that the results presented in the classroom reports were recognizable and complete, more criticism was mentioned about the vagueness and narrowness of the report. Fifteen respondents would like more detailed information in the classroom report. In addition, a number of respondents indicated that they didn't know if the individual teachers recognized their classes in the presented information. As is mentioned before, the classroom reports were sent to the individual teachers and it was left to them whether or not to discuss the results with the school management or their colleagues.

For the future, a number of the interviewed respondents indicated that they would like to receive less anonymous classroom reports. One school leader would like to have a summary of all classroom reports; another school leader is very enthusiastic about the content of the pupil questionnaires and should like to have feedback also at the level of the individual pupil.

The results presented in both school and classroom reports seemed in accordance with the expectations the respondents had before, although at a number of schools the variation of scores (width of the bars) seemed greater than expected. When discussing the variation in a team meeting it became clear that in some cases it resulted from the different interpretation or misinterpretation of a question. But in other cases the opinions differed significantly, although schools weren't aware of this before.

At some interviewed schools the results of the teacher questionnaire were validated by classroom visits by the school management. It occurred several times that from the questionnaire, which depends on the perceptions of the respondents, it appears that the teacher was satisfied with his lessons and classroom management while during classroom visits it appears that the school management was not as satisfied as the teacher.

Nevertheless, the school management dismissed the possibility that the teachers filled in the questionnaire with socially desirable responses. According to them a better explanation is that the teachers are not always fully aware of their actual and desirable teaching performance. In addition, school management suffers from 'the dialectics of progress'. Mostly they have a more sophisticated understanding of desirable teacher performance and the way and direction in which teacher development should take place in the future.

Most schools indicate in the evaluation form that they discussed the school report with (indicated in declining importance) the team and the school management, the participation council, the school board, the parents' committee and the school counselling service. At a number of schools the report has been discussed together with the results of other evaluations, sometimes in parallel, sometimes integrated. The classroom reports have been or will be discussed in team meetings (most frequently mentioned) and in individual meetings between the school leader and the teacher involved. In addition, at three schools a combination of both methods will be used: the more general aspects will be discussed in a team meeting and the more teacher-specific aspects in an individual meeting.

For most interviewed schools, ZEBO-PI was not the first self-evaluation instrumentation they experienced. Eight of the ten schools had experience with other school self-evaluation instruments. Next to this, at seven schools classroom visits took place each year, at one school even three times a year. Mostly these visits are carried out by the school management and focus on aspects of instructional behaviour. But classroom visits are also used to judge the effects of school improvement programmes and actions (i.e. the implementation of a new language method or the effects of professional development).

The inspectorate had visited eight schools. At seven schools a regular supervision took place; one school had an integral supervision. As far as the comparison was possible, the respondents mentioned that the results of ZEBO-PI and the inspectorate correspond reasonably. In addition, schools that were supervised at the moment the results of ZEBO-PI or other self-evaluations were available indicated that they were better prepared for the visit. They were aware of their weak and strong points, they themselves had discussed their policy and improvement plans and therefore seemed less dependent of the findings of the inspectorate. This led to a more constructive and open discussion with the inspectorate, which was appreciated highly by both the schools and the inspectorate.

All ten schools indicated that they drew up improvement plans; however the number of improvement aspects and activities varied. Some schools already had improvement plans before participation in ZEBO-PI. In these cases the feedback of ZEBO-PI confirmed the plans or gave rise to some extensions or adjustments. Some other schools had to start from scratch. At almost all schools the improvement plans have been laid down in the school plan, the policy plan or a quality assurance plan. To draw up the plans schools used all the information available, i.e., the feedback of ZEBO-PI, other school (self-) evaluations and the findings of the inspectorate.

Mostly, the improvement plans are made for four years and contain the themes for improvement. The concrete activities and working methods are being determined per school year and elaborated in an annual plan.

In the plans of all ten schools much attention is paid to the improvement of inclusive education and the development towards adaptive instruction. Other often mentioned areas of improvement are the implementation of a pupil-monitoring system and the determination of a clear line with regard to subject matter content (curriculum quality).

The schools mention clear objectives and transparency as most important conditions for a sound school. In advance of the objectives of the evaluation, the way the evaluation results will be used and the benefits of the evaluation have to be clear and communicated. In the case of ZEBO-PI, where pupils are involved, the objectives and use should also be discussed with the pupils and their parents.

Furthermore, schools indicate that it is important that teachers are open-minded for feedback and criticism; that they are motivated to realise improvements and want to be involved in school policy-making. Self-evaluation requires a climate of trust and has to be set in a developmental context.

Next to this it is important to have instruments of good quality, which are relatively easy to administer and give compact feedback also beyond the school level. The function of the teacher in the classroom should be central and is the foundation for improvement. The perception of the function of the teacher should be validated by means of class visits and personnel evaluation interviews. As indicated before, teachers sometimes seem to be too optimistic about their own function.

School plans, school prospectuses and the elaboration in annual plans force schools to reflect on their own organisation and to perform an analysis of strengths and weaknesses. With that, it is important that the school has ownership over the evaluation, the evaluation results and improvement actions. Each school has to set its own goals and judge its own score. Although external referents on acceptable levels of process variables or the judgement of the inspectorate could be helpful, the creativity and inside-knowledge of school-teams is required to contemplate particular performance patterns.

Finally, the respondents indicate that school self-evaluation should be carried out once every three to five years. By using the same system it will then be easier to determine the progress that has been achieved.

Recommendations for further development

Based on the evaluation of the instrumentation and the utility and usage of the feedback for further development of ZEBO-PI, the following steps will be taken:

- Schools will be given responsibility to choose ZEBO-PI, for the usage of the instrument and the feedback. ZEBO-PI will be made available for schools in a computerized form. Schools can use the instrument at the time they need the information, such as when they have to make a new school plan. And they can have the output immediately.
- The flexibility of the instrument will be enlarged. Schools might want to use the pupil questionnaire more often than the other questionnaires. They might use only parts of the questionnaires concerning a specific issue.
- The flexibility of the output and the feedback will be enlarged. Instead of giving a standard global graphical impression and item scores in tables, schools can fulfil their own wishes; for some scales only the global output; for others item scores or even individual scores.
- Norm-referenced tables (on the basis of percentiles) of the actual performance of a representative reference group of Dutch primary schools will be included. By comparing the mean score of the school with the percentile of Dutch schools with the same or lower score, the school will get more 'sharp' information.
- The support structure will be altered. Next to making the instrument available, the university is going to co-operate with a school counselling service, which can support the schools that use ZEBO-PI. Furthermore, the manual will be extended with more information about the interpretation of feedback, suggestions for further activities either for school improvement or for in-depth analysis, comparisons with and the use of other evaluation methods and addresses for further information and help.

Another possibility for an even more flexible self-evaluation instrument could be to make a distinction between basic monitoring and signalling functions on the one hand and on the other additional instruments for further analysis and diagnosis.

Finally, to get more empirical information on the use of performance feedback the university received a grant to carry out a quasi-experimental study. In this study a control group of seventy-five primary schools will receive feedback only on student progress, whereas the experimental group of seventy-five schools will also obtain information on process indicators. In addition, an in-depth observational study will be carried out to identify characteristics of schools (both in the experimental and control group) that manage to increase their performances most in the period studied (a two-year interval). This observational study will be designed using promising hypotheses derived from the available literature on optimizing performance feedback and evaluation.

Note

1. An internal support teacher assists other teachers in developing and applying instruction methods that allow for dealing appropriately with differences between children in ability, behaviour, etc. This post was created after a new policy in Dutch education on integration of pupils from special and regular education (the so-called inclusive education) was implemented. Internal support teachers are classroom and teacher-oriented in contrast to remedial teachers who focus on assisting individual pupils with learning problems.

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ANALYSIS OF SCHOOLS' FUNCTIONING, ASSESSMENT AND SELF-ASSESSMENT: PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN GENEVA

Bernard Favre

Introduction

What relationship is there between the assessment of schools' performance and a sociological analysis of the way they function? That is the question we intend to address here, on the basis of the work we have been carrying out in Geneva on primary schools as autonomous units and local educational communities, which has enabled us to study their relationships with the various parties involved on a daily basis in the schooling of children.[1]

The assessment of schools is based on the assumption that the school as such plays a crucial role in the realization of the objectives of the education system—that is, in the way pupils learn, in the broadest sense of the term. It assumes that the school enjoys a certain degree of autonomy regarding the resources it employs to achieve these aims and also that a teacher's action only becomes fully effective when he or she is an integral component of a team and of an educational community.

In a centralized education system, however, and particularly in primary education where autonomy—if it exists at all—means above all that of the class teacher, it is difficult to justify assessment of the school itself, since the unit of action is the body of interactions between the teacher and his or her pupils. The school itself does not appear to constitute a specific system of action affecting the extent to which

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For a biographical note about the author, see page 467.

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pupils meet objectives in the course of, or by the end of, primary education. What is taken for granted in systems where schools have a large degree of autonomy poses an immediate problem in a centralized education system: it is difficult to see the relevance of assessment of the school's contribution to the performance levels of its pupils when there appears to be little that is 'real' about the school, apart from its material aspects (such as the school premises). In this connection, Bressoux (1993) showed that the individual teacher was crucial to the performance of pupils learning to read in French primary schools. To take the analysis further, one could ask whether the school itself plays a more important role when it has more autonomy and places greater emphasis on co-operation between teachers. This is the first question to which an institutional and organizational analysis of schools should be able to provide some answers.

A second question should also be addressed: the most difficult task in assessing the effectiveness of training is that of 'designating, selecting and using a certain number of indicators designed to facilitate a precise understanding of the particular process being assessed' (Barbier, 1985, p. 196). If one is assessing a school as the 'action system' concerned, it does not seem feasible to base oneself solely on whatever practical knowledge one might have; ideally the assessor should have a more precise understanding of the way the school functions, which means that the factors involved in the realization of the objectives pursued must be identified beforehand, since the assessment is based on the relationship between the different elements of the 'action system' and the objectives pursued.

Many studies have already been carried out on the way schools function,[2] but the relevance of these studies, taking into account the specific organizational context and level of teaching concerned, has yet to be demonstrated, all the more so if performance indicators play a key role in the assessment of schools. If these indicators are to be of use to the actors themselves, the processes at issue in the training leading up to the results need to be elucidated. Informing a school that the performance of its pupils is—all other things being equal—considerably lower than that of a neighbouring school does not help it to improve if the factors involved have not been taken into account. One might object that assessment requires the construction of a *system* of indicators, and not simply performance indicators. For this, however, one would need to be able to justify this construction and then investigate why in some cases this system of indicators appears to provide insufficient explanation. Thus, the assessment of a school assumes that the way it functions has been analysed and, in many cases, raises new questions in that respect. In other words, analysis of how a school functions *precedes* and *follows* its assessment.

Finally, and it is this third hypothesis that this paper seeks to illustrate—if self-assessment of a school is to contribute to its improvement, it cannot content itself with such rough and ready indicators as the degree of satisfaction of the actors themselves, the school's atmosphere, or the level of co-operation between teachers;[3] it must also make use of analytical tools and knowledge of the way the school functions that are closely linked to the tools and conceptual frameworks used by organizational sociologists.

Primary schools in Geneva: the system as a whole

Geneva has a centralized education system in which, for a long time, co-ordination between teachers was ensured by obliging all schools to adopt the same curricula, teaching methods and timetables. The application of these rules was monitored by inspectors, each of whom was responsible for an average of seventy to eighty classes; some of these inspectors quite openly define themselves today as heads of districts, in other words groups of several schools. This shows that the school as such appears to count for very little.

Co-ordination was also based on the fact that teachers had received the same training, focusing primarily on teaching practices and acquired during periods of practical training as well as through instruction in methods based on the preparation of model lessons that teachers were supposed to reproduce in their classrooms. Because of this, teaching practices were automatically homogenous, and co-ordination between teachers was scarcely necessary, as all of them complied with central directives.

Since the early 1970s, while teachers still follow the same training and are part of the same administrative 'mould', the trend has been towards greater flexibility of curricula and study programmes, which are gradually becoming more goal-oriented and less content-oriented. Similarly, there has been a trend towards greater flexibility in teaching methods. Guidelines are issued to all teachers but, as they are increasingly based on the research of teaching specialists in the various disciplines, teachers themselves are being invited to participate in discussion and research.

This 'liberalization' has not, however, translated into greater autonomy for schools in Geneva. As far as administrative aspects are concerned, for example, schools have no say in the hiring of teachers, are obliged to accept pupils whose families live within the school's catchment area (parents are not free to choose the school they wish their child to attend), do not have their own budget and have very limited power in the daily management of the school (officially the headteachers have administrative—and in some cases disciplinary—powers only).

This situation is changing. With the reform of the primary-school system,[4] a team of teachers in the schools are now asked to draw up a *plan de travail* (work plan) then a *projet d'école* (a school's 'mission statement') of four-year teaching cycles, involving mainly its management.[5]

It is expected that these measures will result in schools becoming more autonomous and, in particular, in the introduction of self-assessment and peer monitoring rather than supervision by hierarchical superiors. To a certain degree, the autonomy of schools has been imposed by administrative decree, in the hope that it will oblige teachers to work together. It is thus in a context of 'dogmatic innovation', in the sense defined by Alter (2000), that the issue of assessment and self-assessment is gradually being addressed in primary schools. One could even form the hypothesis that the autonomy of schools—and thus their specific individual responsibility—is being encouraged in order to confront the gradual fragmentation of teaching methods, the difficulty of controlling this fragmentation in a centralized manner, and the multiplicity of approaches adopted by the teachers themselves.

The investigations to be described below are being conducted in this context of transition and great uncertainty at the level of the system: the aim is to find out more about the practical conditions that need to be changed. What are the primary schools in Geneva on which the changes have been imposed really like? First, they differ greatly in size; while some have two or three classes, others have over thirty. Size depends on location: schools in the city are generally large, while those in country areas tend to be smaller. There is a whole range of gradations in between, since the rural areas around Geneva have gradually turned into residential areas which are growing rapidly and attracting mainly middle- and upper-class families. Schools located in solidly working-class areas, whether in the city or its suburbs, have a high percentage of non-Swiss pupils whose mother-tongue is not French,[6] while those located in residential or rural areas have only a minority of children from working-class backgrounds. This diversity, which is bound up with the urban environment and the strict application of the 'catchment area' principle to identify the school a child should attend[7] makes it difficult to compare one school with another, even in a strongly centralized system. It is compounded, moreover, by the diversity of teachers' ways of dealing with it, adapting their teaching to local conditions or simply developing their own informal strategies in the many 'grey areas' not covered by the centralized regulatory system.

This is where our analysis of the functioning of primary schools in Geneva comes in. We are seeking to establish in as much detail as possible what each school does in the areas of freedom left to it by a heavily centralized system. In terms of assessment, and at a time when primary schools are undergoing a reform process in which more importance is being given to local initiatives, such an approach has two advantages:

- It should make it possible to identify the specific objectives pursued by the teams of teachers in each school, considered by them to be criteria for assessing the quality of their work, and later what indicators teachers use in their own 'spontaneous' assessments.
- It could also provide decision-makers with information on the 'assimilation mechanisms' developed by schools over time, which could be considered as the foundations on which to base the changes called for by the centre. In other words, how does the new way of operating wanted of schools fit into—or obstruct—the areas of autonomy they have appropriated? What initiatives have schools taken so far to adapt to local conditions, and on what local innovations (regarding curriculum, organization, teaching strategies) could reform be based?

Ten primary schools in Geneva: organizational analysis

In order to start answering these questions, we selected ten primary schools, ensuring that as far as possible they covered the range of characteristics observed in respect of size, geographical location (city, suburb or rural area, type of commune or neighbourhood), social background and national origin of pupils, and whether the school was one of those taking part in the reform.[8]

We adopted what has now become the traditional framework of organizational sociology (the French school in particular, but making considerable use of British research),[9] focusing in particular on the role of those involved, the agreements and conventions that allow them to live and work together, the processes governing inter-group relations within the school and the school's relations with its environment. Within this framework, analysing the way a school functions involves:

- Identifying the historical background of events, shared practices and arrangements that have resulted in shared values and a shared culture, with which all teachers can identify.
- Analysing the compromises that teachers make among themselves, when each one (or each sub-group) invokes different principles to affirm the legitimacy of their approach. We are basing ourselves here on the hypothesis advanced by Derouet (1992) and the 'conventions' school—see in particular Boltanski and Thévenot (1991)—according to which actors are no longer guided in modern individualist societies by a single principle of justice, but justify their actions by invoking concurrent principles of justice, and therefore definitions that are not those of the 'accepted' school of thought.[10]
- Identifying the processes that actors and groups of actors implement in their relations with each other and in relations between the school and its environment: one school will take the attitude, vis-à-vis parents, for example, of fighting its corner whereas another will be more receptive and work on various forms of co-operation with parents, including ways of helping children learn.
- Identifying the many networks to which the school and its members belong (the most widely accepted educational movement, social services, training college lecturers, researchers at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Geneva). Allegiance to one or other of these networks can result in different strategies, alliances and sympathies or, on the contrary, in certain forms of isolation.

With regard to methodology, we compiled, for each of the schools analysed, information concerning the teaching staff (average age, replacement rates, training, professional background, etc.), pupils (socio-professional category and national origin of families, trends in pupil numbers), the neighbourhood or commune in which the school was located (type of environment; demographic trends; cultural resources; whether or not there was a parents' association),[11] the school's relations with institutions providing psychological or social support (child-guidance centres, social services, local associations, out-of-school or non-formal educational services, etc.). To understand the way the schools functioned, we carried out a series of interviews[12] with most teachers, particularly the headteacher.[13] These interviews were organized around some main themes: teachers' professional backgrounds (training, previous experience, personal experience since arriving at the school); how they co-operated and communicated with colleagues; the role played in the school by the headteacher and the inspector; their expectations in this area; their view of the teacher's role;

their image of the pupils in their class; their definition of when a pupil is struggling or failing to keep up; and their personal reactions with regard to the broad lines of the reform proposed by the Directorate of Primary Education. Headteachers were, in particular, asked to describe the role they wished to play in their schools, what they thought their colleagues expected of them, and their relations with the inspector and headteachers in other schools. We sometimes met the school caretaker and groups of pupils who were invited to give their views on their life at school, their relations with teachers, the way lessons were conducted, their relations with fellow pupils, etc. We also asked to sit in on certain classes, with the agreement of the teachers concerned.[14] We attended staff meetings (*conseil d'école*), and spent as much time as possible in the staffrooms, school corridors and playgrounds, whenever that could be done without disturbing the day-to-day running of the school or embarrassing teachers too much.

We should also make it clear that the schools we studied did not take part on a voluntary basis, since we chose them in order to have good examples of the different sizes, geographical locations and socio-demographic characteristics already identified above. However, we did negotiate a kind of 'contract' with the teachers of the schools in which we worked. The understanding was that they would open up their school to us, agree to reply to our questions and provide us with all the information we required, while we undertook to show them the results of our research and record their comments. In this way, we provided teachers with data on their school which they were then free to use for their school's benefit, as they saw fit.

Some results and how they tie in with an assessment of schools

It would be impossible to report here on all the findings of our research, which focused on quality rather than quantity and thus provided a very broad range of information. We shall simply identify a number of factors and show how they can be used in an assessment of schools:

- The history of each individual school and how it fits into an institutional system, which in turn has its own history, strongly affects the school's 'culture' and the way it operates.
- Although a centralized education system weakens the role of management at the level of individual schools, local 'reinterpretations' are a key factor in the emergence of innovative trends.
- Although traditional methods of regulating teaching practices have resulted in an individualistic approach in the classroom that has often been deplored, each school develops its own type of co-operation among the different teachers.

HOW THE CULTURE OF A SCHOOL DEVELOPS OVER TIME

In most schools with more than ten classes the teachers speak of a cold, stiff atmosphere existing in the school in the past (in general seen to refer to a period before the

1970s), characterized by reserved relations between colleagues, with widespread use of the formal form of address (*vous*), and an authoritarian headteacher who stood on his/her dignity and insisted on discipline. But the 1970s brought big changes. Relations became warmer, the familiar form of address (*tu*) between teachers became widespread and they began to take meals together and celebrate each other's birthdays.

Some schools moved further than others in this direction, under the leadership of particularly charismatic headteachers. In one large school, for example, at the start of the 1970s, the intake of a younger crop of teaching staff coincided with the arrival of a headteacher who had been trained in Freinet techniques and was very keen to create a warm and friendly atmosphere in his school. He organized regular ski trips for teachers, a film club and meals out in local restaurants once a month. Some teachers went on holiday together and close links were established between their families (it was not uncommon, for example, for colleagues to be godparents of each other's children). Teachers would meet frequently in the staff room, which was always a lively and friendly place. The school was known for the welcome it extended to new teachers, substitute teachers and visitors (the researchers themselves can vouch for this).

By no means all the schools we analysed had the same atmosphere, but the teachers in most of the schools spoke of the quality of relations between adults, either deploring the unpleasant atmosphere in their own schools, saying it had deteriorated over the years, or emphasizing the importance of this aspect of communal life: a good school was, first of all, one in which everyday relations with colleagues were pleasant and friendly.

As a general rule, however, this focus on the quality of relations between teachers does not lead to systematic discussions and arrangements for working together or—unless very indirectly—to a 'communal' style of relations with pupils. To some extent—certainly in the case of the school referred to above—relations in the staff room are governed by a 'system of love',[15] and in the event of problems or conflict the principles of justice in the family are invoked (see Boltanski & Thévenot, 1991; Derouet, 1992) (the headteacher being seen as a father figure). However, as far as relations and work with pupils are concerned, it is still the 'system of justice' that operates, a form of civil justice, where the focus is less on adapting teaching to the specific characteristics of each pupil, or 'individual teaching', and more on the quality of the class teaching, on equal treatment of all and on non-discrimination. The nature of the school's intake (primarily working class or lower-middle class) is rarely mentioned, except to say how it has changed over the years. What is most commonly stressed is that there can only be close relations between colleagues if the professional abilities of each teacher are demonstrated and recognized. 'Dead wood' would not be tolerated in this staff room for long; it would detract from the quality of interpersonal relationships.

To a large extent, the situation in this school is indicative of a more general situation; the definition of a 'good school' in the first place as one whose teachers get on well, where relations are warm and friendly and conflict is relatively rare (and frowned upon when it does occur), has gained ground since the start of the 1970s.

It is the one feature which most clearly distinguishes one school from another. If a teacher likes a particular school and has chosen to stay there, it is because he or she feels comfortable there, has been made to feel welcome and was given support in his or her first years of teaching. Untenured teachers working in several different schools (for example, art, physical education and craft teachers) adopt the same kind of criteria to assess the various schools where they work. This importance attached to the quality of relations in the staff room is probably related to the fact that teachers in Geneva have fixed posts and have virtually life tenure, except in the event of a serious problem or a specific request on their part.

The reason we have stressed the widespread feeling that a good school is a harmonious community of *adults* is because it is not necessarily conducive to the introduction of *team* work, as part of an efficient and autonomous process, for it implies, to a certain extent, a desire to avoid conflict. And yet conflict is probably an essential part of teamwork and of comparisons between different teaching practices. Many teachers are wary of drawing such comparisons.

MANAGEMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Formal responsibility for management in primary schools is exercised by a headteacher whose official function is essentially administrative.[16] However, in reality, headteachers play an important role in ensuring consensus and a good working atmosphere. Replies to a questionnaire distributed to a representative sample of teachers in Geneva[17] confirm this observation, enabling us to establish the following order of priority in the roles assigned to the headteacher:

- First, responsibility for representing the school in relations with the educational and local authorities.
- Then, close behind, responsibility for creating a good atmosphere in the school and for resolving tensions (the headteacher is usually the authority on moral and ethical issues), and for 'maintaining good relations with parents' (mainly via the parents' association, but once again it is interesting to note that it is the quality of relations that is being referred to).
- Tasks relating to the exercise of authority on teaching methods were only rarely attributed to the headteacher (the questionnaire categories were as follows: 'concern for the quality of teaching', 'floating new ideas relating to teaching methods', 'co-ordinating the introduction of new teaching methods').

This last finding is of particular importance in a context of greater autonomy for individual schools, although it is quite in keeping with the formal definition of the role of the headteacher. Only 21% of the teachers who replied to the questionnaire considered that the headteacher should co-ordinate the introduction of new teaching methods and 19% that he or she float new ideas relating to teaching methods. Not all teachers refused to assign these roles to the head, but a great deal of reluctance was expressed, a quarter of teachers even being of the view that the task of co-ordinating the introduction of new teaching methods was definitely *not* the job of the headteacher.

These findings confirm the view outlined above that the teaching community is primarily a function of interpersonal relations, and the main role of the headteacher inside the school is to maintain the quality of these relations. However, the different roles of the headteacher vary from school to school. In other words, in each of the schools studied the head and the teaching staff 'invent' a way of acting out this role. Earlier on we described one headteacher as a charismatic leader and 'father figure' who shied away from any involvement in teaching methods. There is also the 'lightning conductor' type, who tries to maintain a harmonious atmosphere by defusing over-enthusiastic calls for change or by acting as a shield between staff and demanding inspectors or interfering parents. At the other extreme one also—occasionally—comes across headteachers who take a leading role in the organization and development of teaching activities and try to carry their staff with them in innovative initiatives.

While interpretations of this role vary from school to school, they all share a certain wariness of any tendency for the head to impose his or her authority in the specific area of teaching methods. This is each individual teacher's 'secret garden', and if the head is accepted as having any authority in this area it is on an informal basis and must be related to his or her specific skills in a particular field (discipline, techniques, methodology), acknowledged by the teachers but not subject to official recognition.

When addressing this matter of authority, the role played by school inspectors also needs to be studied; it is no longer one of checking that the teaching practices of individual teachers comply with the models established by the system, but rather that of 'firemen' called upon to intervene in the event of serious conflict between teachers or with parents. However, inspectors also try to 'reinvent' their roles, most often by encouraging innovative initiatives, regulating the appointment of teachers so as to strengthen a new team or ensure a balance between teachers with new ideas and more traditional teachers; in other cases, especially where there is an 'innovative' school in an inspector's district, they will support initiatives and act as mediator when the team is unable to solve certain difficulties itself, while leaving teachers as broad a margin of manoeuvre as possible.[18]

METHODS OF CO-OPERATION BETWEEN TEACHERS

If there is one theme that is constantly harped upon when normative approaches to teaching are invoked, it is that of individualism: the classroom being seen as off-limits. Once the door has been closed, the teacher alone is in charge, and any attempt at scrutiny by an outsider is strongly resisted. Our organizational analysis calls this truism into question or at least requires a less categorical stand on the matter.

As we saw earlier, in a centralized education system arrangements for the regulation of teachers' work presuppose that they operate in isolation, the way they work being dictated by the curriculum, the textbooks and the teaching methods adopted, and co-ordination between the different levels ensured by all teachers complying with the rules handed down from above. In this sense, the individualism of the teacher is a product of the system. On an informal level, however, there is a great deal of interaction, although social relations between teachers vary considerably from one school to another; in some schools interaction is limited to a minimum of civility while in others teachers outside the classroom form a real community, discussing not only pupils but also problems encountered in the classroom and teaching approaches, but always informally. Over the last twenty years classes have had to open up to special needs teachers, who help those pupils with the most difficulties, and specialized teachers (craft, physical education, music, etc.). The number of classes taught by two teachers[19] working together has continued to rise, accounting in 1998 for approximately 150 out of a total of 1,400 classes. Teaching in tandem is not strictly speaking a form of 'team teaching', but it does imply continuous co-ordination between the teachers and two different approaches to pupils. Classes have also opened up to parents, and a far from recent study[20] showed that almost one-third of teachers (especially at elementary level) organized open classes for parents.

In the schools we studied, we observed a great variety of forms of collaboration. In some schools it was kept to a minimum, work in the classroom remaining very much a solitary task, albeit with the occasional exchange of documents, ideas and information concerning pupils. At the other extreme, co-operation would involve teaching practices themselves; for example, teachers would prepare certain teaching sequences together, compare the results obtained and change their approach accordingly. We are thus able not only to construct a typology of ways in which authority is exercised, but also a typology of forms of collaboration between individual teachers.

Organizational analysis as an aid to the self-assessment of schools

In the previous section we focused on aspects of the ways schools function that are often used as indicators of their quality: the way authority is exercised, methods of collaboration between teachers, the extent of agreement between them, their view of the teaching profession, etc. While organizational analysis shows that these factors, within each school, constitute a system or are closely related, it also shows that they are neither static nor easy to control. The forms they take in each specific school are the visible expression of social processes that are highly temporal in nature and of complex interactions among teachers and between the school and its environment (not only the education system as a whole, but also the local environment, encompassing parents, local authorities, etc.). The balance between all of these elements is sometimes fragile and interactions can often appear to be 'blocked', particularly when tension between the various elements is high. Seen from the outside, it is easy to explain this situation in terms of resistance to change or to denounce the inertia or lack of co-operation of some actors. In our view, if organizational analysis is to contribute to a type of assessment from which lessons can be learned, the actors' logical processes and strategies must be analysed from within and a comprehensive sociological approach adopted.[21] We shall illustrate these rather abstract theoretical comments with two examples of the way schools function that were observed in our case studies.

DIFFICULTIES IN ABANDONING THE 'HAPPY FAMILY' APPROACH

This particular school is located in the countryside near Geneva and today has around fifteen classes. Less than twenty years ago the commune was inhabited mainly by farmers and market gardeners. There were only three or four classes, and each teacher was teaching pupils of two or three different grades. Relations between teachers and classes were very informal, adapted to life in a small school, as were relations with the local authorities. However, in the space of a few years the population expanded considerably, and the commune became mainly residential, with a majority of middle- and upper-class families. Instead of three classes there were now fifteen, and it had become clear that the forms of management and communication between teachers that had been perfectly suitable until then no longer worked. The same headteacher remained, however, and, like some of the new teachers who came to join the staff, favoured a liberal, 'happy family' type of management approach. However, other members of the team felt that this was not enough and pushed for a more formalistic approach to rule-making. At the same time, a parents' association was created which turned out to be particularly aggressive and demanding. At the time we conducted our analysis, the teaching staff seemed to be divided as to which strategies to adopt for relations both inside and outside the school. Seen from the outside it looked like deadlock. In fact, under the surface, a lot was going on and the resistance to change was the expression of a conflict that teachers were unable to put into words.

The only way in which the school's functioning could adapt to the new situation in the long run would be for the teachers to realize what was happening and work through the latent conflict. However, this in turn would beg other questions, for example: does the school have the skills necessary to operate a new regulatory system (for example management skills, official formulation of relations between teachers)? Is the inspector able to understand what is happening and take effective action? Could the *status quo* not be maintained under the existing centralized management system as, after all, the school is still functioning and all the teachers are working to the best of their abilities and observing the rules?

This example highlights the importance, for the process of assessment and self-assessment, of analytical tools that enable those involved to grasp their situation in all its complexity and to translate the issues into ideas leading to the design and introduction of new regulatory systems.

WHEN PUPILS RESIST TEACHERS' STRATEGIES

This example concerns a school where some teachers decided in 1995 to draw up a *projet d'école* (a 'mission statement' for the school) and to make it part of the primary school reform. The school is a large, urban school with a majority of working-class pupils (almost 60% of pupils come from working-class or non-Swiss families). The idea of drawing up a *projet d'école* was strongly supported by a small group of specialist teachers (crafts, music, physical education). The cost-cutting policy operating at the time made these teachers feel that their posts were seriously threatened, and by actively participating in drawing up the *projet d'école* they were able to draw attention to the importance of their work, especially in a working-class school. They believed that the subjects they taught could fire the enthusiasm of pupils whose background did not necessarily incline them to pursue intellectual activities. An important part of the *projet d'école* was therefore the creation of decompartmentalized workshops,[22] each attended by a small number of pupils. Participation in these workshops was conceived as a kind of stepping stone to more scholarly activities. The idea was that children would begin to enjoy going to school more because of these workshops and thus be more highly motivated when it came to academic subjects, which they tended to reject.

The idea was welcomed enthusiastically by the teachers of more academic disciplines, several of whom supported the idea of teaching teams and the active school. However, when we visited the school the teachers voiced concerns about the organizational problems involved in setting up the decompartmentalized workshops, which took up most of the time available for team-working. Moreover, the *projet d'école* did not seem to have increased pupils' interest in French and mathematics, although it had been designed primarily as a means of combating underachievement at school.

This example shows a group of teachers apparently using the *projet d'école* to serve their own interests by highlighting their contribution to pupils' learning. This kind of situation is very familiar to organization analysts, who have no problem in defining an organization as a set of mechanisms which enables actors or groups of actors pursuing their own goals to nevertheless achieve the overall goals of the organization. We should note, however, that in this case it was not simply a matter of private goals:[23] this group of teachers justified its action on the basis of principles considered to be generally valid in schools today, and which are shared by their colleagues. The difficulty arises when the problem is posed in terms of *effective learning* for pupils from working-class backgrounds. What may seem right to teachers—themselves middle class—who subscribe to middle-class theories of childhood and to learning methods which focus on a child's autonomy and fulfilment, is not necessarily appropriate for children from working-class backgrounds.[24]

In this case, an analysis which focuses on the actors themselves identifies the type of reasoning that guides them: in this analysis the actors are taken seriously and encouraged to question their middle-class preconceptions. This leads to a form of 'decentring' encouraging them to consider exactly what methods of academic learning are suitable for children of working-class backgrounds and to question whether, by motivating these children with familiar activities, they are not encouraging their tendency to shun academic learning processes, and whether such processes should be linked in different ways to activities exploiting their manual skills. It is not certain, in any event, that performance indicators alone would have enabled this team of teachers to reconsider the way it operated.

INSTITUTIONAL REGULATION AND ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOLS

An organizational analysis of schools must necessarily take into account the dynamics of the relationship between a school and its environment. In the examples above, we saw the pressure that can be exerted on schools and the way they function by system-wide standards, pupils' families, and the mind-set and ideas of the social groups to which the teachers belong. We shall now briefly show how the messages conveyed by the education authorities influence schools' internal dynamics.

Among the schools we analysed, those that have accepted the reform process all subscribe—in one way or another—to the idea of 'teaching teams'. Teaching teams have a long history in Geneva; they expanded fairly rapidly from the end of the 1970s onwards, and since then have had a chequered relationship with the school authorities. The Directorate of Primary Education encouraged the creation of such teams under pressure from the teachers' union, but these—militant—teams saw themselves as active critics of a way of functioning considered to be excessively bureaucratic and of teaching methods they judged to be too authoritarian or rigid. In some cases, they disseminated the 'child-centred teaching' theories of the active school, which were by no means universally approved by teachers and parents. These teaching teams met with varying degrees of success, but the primary-school education reform launched in 1995 gave them a new role, focusing them very firmly on effectiveness and the 'mission statement'—on the model of industry.[25] Many teachers, nevertheless, had the impression that one particular trend or ideology had thereby been given official sanction, and this launched a new version of the debate between the 'traditionalists' and 'modernists', reviving painful memories in certain schools.

All this calls into question the objectives of the primary-school reform and the underlying meaning of the exhortations to teachers to be more independent and professional. In other words, in a traditionally centralizing system dominated thus far by a bureaucratic regulatory system, messages from the education authorities, even when intended to call into question former modes of operation, are still perceived as stemming from the same bureaucratic approach.

Organizational analysis has to identify the often tortuous routes travelled by messages as they wend their way from the centre to the periphery, and the contradictory interpretations, ambiguities and, in some cases, crises of confidence that can ensue. It thus highlights the close links between changes at the local level and changes in the regulatory systems as a whole. The work of clarification that is thus made necessary is a key factor in determining the effectiveness of any assessment or self-assessment of schools.

By way of conclusion

COMING TO GRIPS WITH THE COMPLEXITY OF ORGANIZATIONS

In our view, any purely evaluative approach towards schools is bound to be caught up, to varying degrees, by the issue of ends and means: what means does a school employ to achieve the levels of performance required of it? Are these means the most suitable and the most effective? In our view, one of the most useful contributions of the organizational analysis of schools is that it shows that the way they operate in real life does not in fact obey the linear logic of ends and means. Collective action does not follow this type of logic. The path linking the means to the end wends its way through a complex system of interactions which includes pupils as well as teachers. While teaching methods, the situations in which pupils find themselves, the problems they have to solve and the formal machinery promoting co-operation between teachers all constitute necessary forms of mediation, their effectiveness is always dependent on the way they are used and the meaning they are given by the actors involved.

For this reason we think it would help if the actors were to use certain organizational analysis tools for themselves. Crozier (2000), in line with Argyris, distinguishes 'utilizable knowledge' from 'applicable knowledge': 'All knowledge in the social sciences,' he says, 'that increases our *understanding*[26] of the behaviour of actors and the problems they are confronted with is applicable knowledge', but this does not necessarily mean that it can be used by the actors. Applicable knowledge has generated many *prescriptive* theories, but these are only rarely put into practice by those involved. Knowledge only becomes 'utilizable' if it allows actors to ask new questions and try out the theories proposed, and if it helps to 'enable people to conduct relations based on power, and understand and analyze them' (ibid., p. 305).

What we call learning about organizations comes at this price: there can be no improvement in the way schools function without awareness of the way different groups and individuals defend their interests or exercise power in the day-to-day operation of a collective body, or of the multiple meanings attributed to their daily interactions. There must also be an awareness of the contradictory stimuli emerging from these interactions on a daily basis, which often lead to mental blocks, resistance to change and repeated deadlock—all of which lead a great many teachers to conclude that 'going it alone' has much more to be said for it than unsuccessful efforts to co-ordinate their work with that of their colleagues.

WHO IS TO BE ACCOUNTABLE?

In the context of assessment, the importance attached by organizational analysis to the school environment strongly challenges the idea that decentralization could absolve the central authority or pupils' families, or indeed local officials, of all responsibility for schools' performance. There can be no assessment of a school's performance without an assessment in parallel of the regulatory methods imposed by the central authority, which would address questions such as whether the context in which they operate enables schools to organize themselves independently and teachers to be more professional and take responsibility for their decisions. Although it is important to assess individual schools, it is also important to assess the actions and decisions of the educational authorities, the role played by intermediary officials, teacher trainers and researchers,[27] the strategies pursued by the parents' associations and the many pressure groups that all think they know what is best for the school. In other terms, not everything that goes on inside a school can be dealt with inside the school (see Beillerot, 2000). The quality of a school reflects the quality of its institutional, social, cultural and economic environment.

In this sense, there can be no self-assessment without assessment by others. One group of actors is probably never able accurately to assess what is its responsibility and what is the responsibility of another groups of actors (the pupils themselves forming one of these other groups). It is therefore only by comparing assessments carried out by the different groups of actors that a more accurate view can be formed of the responsibility of the various parties involved for the results achieved. This will also help the group operating in the school to adjust its own strategies to the overall situation.

Notes

1. See B. Favre and F. Osiek, *Les écoles primaires genevoises* [Primary schools in Geneva]—in press.
2. See the summary by J.-L. Derouet (1987); see also V. Dupriez (1999).
3. See, for example, the comments of P. Bressoux (1994) on the concept of the 'atmosphere' in a school.
4. In 1995 the Directorate of Primary Education proposed a reform of the way primary schools functioned on the basis of principles such as greater differentiation of teaching, leading to a system of cycles rather than having a different grade each year, teamwork, and the drawing-up by each school of a *projet d'établissement* (a school's 'mission statement'). See: Directorate of Primary Education, *Texte d'orientation* [Guidelines], Geneva, Cantonal Department of Education, August 1994.
5. The primary school system in Geneva, for 4- to 12-year-olds, is now divided into two four-year cycles, with the division into grades by year being gradually eliminated.
6. Approximately 40% of pupils in Geneva are of non-Swiss origin. Some schools, mainly in working-class areas, have over 60% of pupils whose mother-tongue is not French. See: Service de la recherche en éducation, 2001.
7. This principle applies specifically to primary schools, which are located in such a way that children can attend a school as close as possible to their home.
8. For an initial four-year period, seventeen schools volunteered to take part in an exploratory phase of practical implementation of these general principles. We included three of these seventeen schools in our analysis. For some data regarding the assessment of this initial phase, see Favre et al. (1999).
9. See the analysis proposed by H. Amblard, P. Bernoux, G. Herreros and Y.F. Livian (1996).
10. It is likely that in highly decentralized education systems in which parents can choose which school to send their children to, these principles of legitimacy define the overall line of each school rather than the personal position of each teacher or group of teachers.
11. Unlike the situation in France, parent associations in Switzerland are not officially recognized, although their umbrella association is represented in certain bodies of the Department of Public Education; they are set up on a purely voluntary basis; they are

seen more frequently and are generally more active in districts and municipalities inhabited by mainly middle-class and upper-class families (see indicator D5 in Service de la recherche en éducation, 2001).

12. These were semi-directive interviews, generally lasting an hour-and-a-half or two hours.
13. Officially, the headteachers cannot be considered as decision-makers; their responsibilities are essentially of an administrative nature: they provide the Directorate of Primary Education, via the inspector, with all information concerning pupils' attendance and the organization of classes. They also have responsibility for certain disciplinary matters, e.g. the replacement of absent teachers and organizing the supervision of recreation periods.
14. There was no systematic observation of classes. Classroom teaching was not our main area of interest. What we were mainly interested in was to what extent the methods of individual teachers were known and communicated to colleagues, and subsequently used by all the teachers in a school.
15. We are referring here to the distinction introduced by Luc Boltanski (1990) between a 'system of love' and a 'system of justice', which formed the basis for his theory on the subject.
16. See note 13.
17. See Favre et al. (1999).
18. Our observations would tend to confirm the importance of the role played by intermediary officials in learning organizations, highlighted in particular by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1997).
19. Class taught by two teachers, each working half-time.
20. See Favre and Montandon (1989).
21. In the study by Cyril Lemieux (2000) on journalism one finds an illustration, both theoretical and empirical, of the advantages of an approach centred on individual actors in a broad sociological context which distances itself from the 'critical' sociological approach, without presenting a wholesale endorsement of the individual actor's views.
22. Each workshop is attended by pupils from different grades, for greater differentiation and co-operation between pupils.
23. As in the position adopted by supporters of methodological individualism. We, for our part, refer here to the 'economics of conventions' and to the work of Boltanski and Thévenot (1991), who do not see actors as simply seeking to maximize their individual interests, independently of any reference to *values*, or to views of what action is fair and legitimate in a given situation.
24. See the assessment carried out in France of strategies frequently adopted by teachers in priority education zones (ZEPs).
25. See Boltanski and Thévenot (1991) and Boltanski and Chiapello (1999).
26. My italics.
27. In Geneva, in particular, some researchers played a key role in defining new directions for primary schools and in drafting the circulars sent out to schools.

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SELF-GOVERNING SCHOOLS AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN NEW ZEALAND

Edward B. Fiske and Helen F. Ladd

In 1989 New Zealand embarked on an ambitious effort to decentralize the governance of its State school system. Under a plan known as the Tomorrow's Schools reforms, Parliament abolished the national Department of Education, which had overseen State schools for decades, and transferred operational control of the country's nearly 2,700 primary and secondary schools to boards of trustees elected and controlled by the parents of current students in each school. The central government continued to fund the schools and to negotiate national teacher contracts through a new Ministry of Education, whose mandate revolved around policy rather than operational authority.

Central to the reform was a new system for holding the self-governing schools accountable to the public. In this paper we describe how school reformers in New

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Zealand balanced school autonomy and public accountability and discuss that country's experience during the 1990s. The discussion draws heavily on our book on the Tomorrow's Schools reforms titled *When schools compete: a cautionary tale* which covers the period 1989 through 1998. We have added a brief update on more recent policy debates.[1]

The genesis of school decentralization in New Zealand

The groundwork for New Zealand's move to decentralize school governance was laid in 1987 when the ruling Labour Government appointed a Taskforce to Review Education Administration, headed by businessman Brian Picot, to suggest a way of structuring a decentralized system. The government had already taken similar steps in other sectors, notably the national health and welfare systems. Broadly speaking, the task force was operating in the context of two sets of forces. We call them the democratic-populist and the managerial-business currents.[2]

THE DEMOCRATIC-POPULIST CURRENT

The move to self-governing schools as part of the Tomorrow's Schools reforms was consistent with a long-standing tradition of community involvement in schools. New Zealanders had created a society with strong egalitarian values that encouraged popular involvement in social and political institutions. Every primary school had an elected school committee consisting of five to nine local persons that was charged with maintaining the school premises, paying the caretaker and organizing local fund-raising activities and parent volunteer activities. Secondary schools were run by locally elected boards of governors that included both parents and community representatives and whose responsibilities extended to the management of finances, selection of principals and the hiring of teachers. In neither case, however, did the committees or boards have any voice in curriculum, which was centrally controlled, or over day-to-day management, which was the responsibility of the principal.

Despite these formal mechanisms for giving local communities a voice in educational policy, pressure began to mount in the early 1970s for even greater parental involvement in the running of schools, for giving local schools more operational independence from the Department of Education, and for developing closer working relationships between schools and their communities. Such themes were sounded repeatedly at national education gatherings, and a 1976 report by the department had identified relations between schools and their communities as an area that warranted attention. Such talk, however, produced only modest changes, such as an increase in parental representation on secondary school boards.

Additional support for more community involvement came on behalf of New Zealand's minority community. The mid-1980s brought growing attention to ways in which the State education system was failing to meet the needs of significant segments of the population, most notably the Maori and Pacific Islanders. It seemed to many of them that the school system, run by a large professional bureaucracy, had lost touch with the communities it served.

The crescendo of calls for greater parental and community involvement in the running of schools, was not lost on members of the Picot Task Force. In their report, they wrote that the public submissions they had received were marked by 'a common theme of powerlessness—and consumer dissatisfaction and disaffection', as well as by 'feelings of frustration in the face of a system that too often appeared inflexible and unresponsive to consumer demand'. The task force said that alienation was particularly strong among 'those who had been failed by the system in the past' and noted that Maori and Pacific Island children are disproportionately represented in this failing group.[3]

THE MANAGERIAL-BUSINESS CURRENT

Although democratic-populist themes were sounded frequently in the deliberations and recommendations of the Picot Task Force, its fundamental mandate was to grapple with issues central to a second current that viewed managerial effectiveness as the key to school improvement. The committee had been given a businesslike name (Task Force to Review Education Administration) and its report bore the rather dry title *Administering for excellence: effective administration in education.*

Whereas democratic-populists saw decentralization as a way of enhancing the community voice in the running of schools, those sympathetic to the managerial-business current saw it as a way to improve teaching and learning by locating decisions closer to the point of implementation. Task-force members had heard ample testimony about managerial problems associated with the existing system, including numerous horror stories about bureaucrats who favoured process over results. After considering a variety of ways to restructure the department, they came to the conclusion that reforming the existing structure was hopeless and that what was needed was an entirely new apparatus. 'Tinkering with the system will not be sufficient to achieve the improvements now required', the task force wrote. 'In our view the time has come for quite radical change, particularly to reduce the number of decision points between the central provision of policy, funding, and services and the education delivered by the school or institution'.[4]

Significantly, Picot and his task force did not oppose a strong centrally directed State education system. To the contrary, Picot believed that running a system that provided quality education to all citizens was an important and fitting responsibility of the national government. He and his committee were simply arguing for good management, and one way to do this, they argued, was to devolve as many operational decisions as possible to the level where teaching and learning took place.[5]

A TIGHT-LOOSE-TIGHT STRUCTURE

The cumulative effect of the various currents that went into the Tomorrow's Schools was what may be described as a tight-loose-tight system of school governance. Under

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such an approach, the goals and missions of the schools would be clear (that is, tight), the schools would have significant responsibility for how they operate (the loose part), and schools would be held tightly accountable to the centre for outcomes. For a number of reasons, New Zealand has not fully achieved a governance structure of this type, but its efforts to move in that direction provide insight into the challenges of implementing such a structure.

In opting for a tight-loose-tight system, the Tomorrow's Schools reforms had forced a major rethinking of how New Zealand held its schools accountable. Under the system in place before 1989, accountability was built into the process of delivering education through a network of regionally based inspectors employed by the national Department of Education. Inspectors carried out a variety of operational responsibilities, including the hiring and firing of teachers, professional development, allocation of resources, development of new curricula and providing advice to administrators. The inspectors were, for the most part, respected educators who, in addition to carrying out their formal responsibilities, provided important informal services. They offered advice on curricular or personnel matters, and could use their contacts to solve thorny problems, such as arranging for the transfer of a teacher who was not getting along with his or her principal. Although the nature of their jobs was such that the inspectors inevitably provoked anxiety among principals and teachers, they were also seen as having an avuncular side, and the harshness of their judgements was tempered by the fact that they functioned behind the scenes.

Such a system was, however, incompatible with the principle of self-governance embraced in 1989. Autonomous schools needed to be held accountable, not through direct interventions of authority figures but through some sort of *quid pro quo*. Operational freedom came with the understanding that schools would use this freedom in the service of the state that created and funded them. In short, accountability was the price of freedom.

The Education Review Office

Given the previous system's roots in the British education system, it came as no surprise that New Zealand opted for a variation on the inspectorate model as a means of assuring accountability under the Tomorrow's Schools reforms. The initial reform legislation established a new agency, the Education Review Office (ERO),[6] that would be independent of the Ministry of Education—though responsible to the minister of education—and charged it with providing an independent and arms-length evaluation at least every two years of how well each school was performing. The ERO sends teams of one to five outsiders, all former teachers, into each school for several days. Members visit classes, pour over documents and records and then discuss a draft report with the schools. The team then issues a final public report laying out both the school's strengths and its deficiencies.

In recommending such a set-up, the Picot Task Force in effect abandoned a professional model of accountability aimed primarily at helping teachers deal with the teaching and learning process in favour of a more management-oriented model that would minimize the possibility of monitors being 'captured' by the groups they were evaluating. Under the management approach, the focus was on good managerial practices, and the major purpose was to inform boards about how well school staff members were doing, to provide the government with information on the performance of schools and to provide information to groups outside the system.

A SHAKY BEGINNING

The Education Review Office got off to a halting start, in part because the law that established it provided only sketchy direction about how the agency should operate and what it should do. While the agency's head, the chief review officer, was empowered to send teams into schools to obtain information and to write reports, the agency was given no authority to enforce its recommendations. The initial idea was that the agency would audit both the financial and the educational programmes of the schools (including early childhood centres) and that it would also evaluate the quality of the policy advice that the ministry was giving to the minister of education. Early on, however, the financial function was reduced, with full responsibility for financial auditing placed with the auditor general, and the agency was stripped of its mandate to review the policy advice of the ministry.

Despite a large operating budget with provision for 306 employees, the new Education Review Office initially accomplished little and had trouble determining its new direction. One reason for the confusion was the decision by the first head to establish ten relatively autonomous regional offices, each with thirty employees who in many cases were carry-overs from the old Department of Education. This move sent a signal that things might not be too different than in the past. A highly critical 1990 review by a committee that was set up to review all of the Tomorrow's Schools reforms urged a major restructuring of the agency and a 40% cut in its budget. After a year without a permanent head the new agency finally began to develop a sense of identity and purpose under Judith Aitken, who was hired as its new chief review officer in 1992. Aitken came to the job with some background in teaching, but most of her training and experience was in public administration and strategic planning.

TENSIONS OVER THE ROLE OF CHARTERS

Aitken's task was complicated by inherent tensions that had manifested themselves even before the ink was dry on the Tomorrow's Schools legislation. The most significant of these tensions related to the nature of local school charters.

In keeping with democratic-populist principles, the notion was that every school would build its programme around a written charter giving formal voice to the aspirations that local communities held for their schools. Since the schools were part of a national system, however, it was also understood from the outset that local school charters would be consistent with national curricular and other public interests that justify their public funding.

The fundamental goals and objectives for New Zealand's education system are spelled out in a three-part document titled the *national education guidelines* (NEGS) that emerged in its current form in 1993 and must be incorporated into all school charters. These guidelines consist of national education goals and administration guidelines, as well as national curriculum statements. The national education goals are quite broad and include such ambitious objectives as high achievement for all students, equality of educational opportunity and development of the knowledge and skills needed by New Zealanders to compete successfully in the 'modern, ever-changing world'. They also call for the advancement of Maori education and respect for the diverse ethnic and cultural heritage of New Zealand people. The national administration guidelines spell out general responsibilities for the boards of trustees in the areas of student achievement, employment and personnel matters, finance and property issues and the provision of a safe physical and emotional environment for students.

Charters were intended to be the 'lynchpin' of the new structure of compulsory education and, as such, to provide each school with 'clear and explicit objectives' reflecting 'both national requirements and local needs'.[7] The charters would constitute a 'contract between the community and the institution, and the institution and the state'.[8] Under this three-way contract the various parties would have different responsibilities but would relate as equals. The state would fund schools and provide national guidelines, while boards of trustees would make local policies and run the schools in line with community interests.

But the language papered over some built-in ambiguities. With primary and secondary education compulsory, how much control over missions should the State cede to schools? Could the charter ever be a contract in the sense of imposing enforceable responsibilities and obligations on all parties? If so, how would it be enforced? Could the government commit itself to provide sufficient funding for a school to achieve the objectives in the charter? Working out such details was the task of an implementation group, which circulated a draft framework for charters in March 1989 and a final version in May. These documents addressed the ambiguities by substantially altering the design laid out in the earlier documents.

The March draft made it clear that local school communities (that is, parents connected with the school) would have little or no say over about 80% of the content of school charters because, to protect the government's interest in educational outcomes, the government was already planning to require that every charter include a commitment to the national educational guidelines. The May 1989 framework further weakened the power of parents by changing the three-way contract to a bilateral agreement between a school's board of trustees and the Minister of Education, leaving no formal governance role for the local community in the form of obligatory opportunities for parental input.

Partly out of concern about the ministry's insufficient capacity to negotiate and approve 2,700 new charters in a short period of time, and partly because the Picot Task Force had overestimated the ability of local boards to develop meaningful charters that were explicit enough to be used as accountability documents, the charter framework was changed once again in January 1990. First, the relationship between the two parties was further downgraded from an 'agreement' to an 'undertaking'. Second, the new document removed the ministry's legal obligation to provide adequate funding to schools, thus turning the former partnership into what amounted to a one-way obligation of boards to the State. A subsequent final change, acknowledging that schools might not have adequate funding to achieve the goals and objectives of their charters, altered the language to require only that the schools make reasonable efforts to do so within the resources available to them.

Thus, in a few months the charter went from being a three-way contract or partnership to a two-way 'agreement' to a one-way 'undertaking'. As Liz Gordon, an academic critic who subsequently became a Member of Parliament as a member of the small left-wing Alliance Party, wrote shortly afterwards: 'The state had taken the first step in regaining the power that had been given away in the Picot Report'.[9] As a result, not only did school communities come to play a smaller role in the charter development process than had been envisioned but the content of charters became homogenized. Under such circumstances charters could not serve as a clear basis for accountability.

The ERO and the schools

Since the charter failed to emerge as the definitive document envisioned by members of the task force, the Education Review Office faced the task of determining for itself what it should be looking at as it carried out its responsibility to monitor schools. With a background in public management, Aitken opted for a formal approach to review process that involved two distinct types of audit: assurance and effectiveness.

ASSURANCE AUDITS

The first type of audit, which began in 1992, was designed to assure that the boards of trustees were meeting their legal obligations to the Crown as specified in the school's charter, including the National Education Guidelines, and in other agreements between the State and the schools, such as the school's property agreement. This relatively narrow emphasis on legal compliance meant that assurance audits focused on administrative process as opposed to impacts on students or educational outcomes. As Aitken explained to us in an interview, such a focus on compliance was essential during the early years of the Tomorrow's Schools reform when lay boards were still learning what was expected of them. During 1992/93, only 12% of the boards of trustees were operating in a fully lawful way. By 1998 the proportion was up to 90%.

EFFECTIVENESS AUDITS

In 1993, the ERO added the second type of audits to its arsenal as a means of shift-ing its attention towards student achievement. According to official documents, an effectiveness review is 'an evaluation of student achievement and the impact of the teaching services and management practices within a school on that achievement'.[10] Such a description is a bit misleading, however, since, in the absence of national compulsory tests, the ERO had no reasonable way to compare student achievement in one school either with other schools or with national standards.

Instead, effectiveness reviews were primarily process-oriented and posed two specific questions to local boards of trustees: (1) What do you expect the children in the school to learn? and (2) How will you know that learning has occurred? Thus the ERO sought to encourage schools to focus on student achievement and to implement practices, such as better systems of assessing students, that would allow the trustees and the principal to gain a better sense of how much students were learning. While the reviewers spent time in classrooms and comment in their reports on the quality of teaching in schools, they lacked the authority of inspectors in the former system to evaluate individual teachers.

In 1998 the ERO began to consolidate the two earlier forms of review into a single combined accountability review with the purpose of assisting in improving the quality of education for students. The new reviews were supposed to pay less attention to the compliance issues that were so central in the early days of the Tomorrow's Schools governance reforms, to give more attention to academic outcomes and to put more emphasis on the adequacy of schools' own self-review reports.

HOW SCHOOLS RESPONDED TO THE ERO

One of the first changes that Judith Aitken made when she assumed leadership of the ERO was to make all of its reports public and to encourage the local newspapers and television stations to publicize them. Given that the ERO had no enforcement power, she viewed public information as the main policy tool available to her to induce the schools to improve. For ambitious principals and teachers, being at a school with positive ERO reports had major benefits. In addition, it could have a potentially big impact on how attractive the school was to potential students and their parents (a factor that became significant with the introduction of parental choice in 1991).

The site visits by ERO teams and the public reports that they produced elicited a wide range of reactions from educators, parents and board members in the schools they visited. In a survey of principals of primary schools that went through ERO visits in 1995/96, Cathy Wylie of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research found that 51% said that the review process had been on balance a positive experience, while 49% described it as more negative.[11] In practice, most schools, especially those without significant enrolment problems, have now more or less learned to take ERO visits in stride. Jill Stanley, principal of the Porirua School near Wellington, said that since she and her teachers routinely keep rather detailed records of student performance, they do not have to spend much time preparing for ERO visits. 'It's basically a question of tidying up the records we already have', she said.[12]

The Wylie study found that 75% of primary school principals viewed the ERO team members as either reasonably or highly professional; yet only 32% felt that the review team had sufficient understanding of the particular needs of their school, and 24% thought the team had no such understanding. A general view among teachers and principals seems to be that ERO reports were not particularly helpful on important issues relating to teaching and learning. 'Teachers find the ERO people very off-putting', said Dennis Thompson, principal of Lyall Bay School in Wellington. 'Some of the people are not familiar with primary education. They come in the classroom not sure of what they are looking for, and some of the statements they make are not well founded. There is nothing that the school gets out of the process. We have had three glowing reports, and the only recommendation from the most recent one told us that the gate on the swimming pool swings the wrong way'.[13]

Another review of the ERO, this one sponsored by the Post Primary Teachers' Association, the secondary school teachers' union, also found mixed responses.[14] Respondents complained that schools sometimes put their efforts into compliance rather than genuine school improvement. They reiterated complaints that review teams did not put enough emphasis on what goes on in classrooms and suggested that the resulting media reporting generated a negative view of the teaching profession.

Since drawing up the more than two dozen policies required was a time-consuming task for educators and trustees, a cottage industry developed in which principals, sometimes for a fee, would fax to colleagues the documents that they were obligated to create on particular topics, such as how the school was protecting animal rights. A major emphasis was also placed on whether teachers were keeping adequate records on student achievement. Not surprisingly, principals criticized the ERO teams for nit-picking and creating unnecessary paperwork. Teresa Lilley, the deputy principal of Mt. Albert Primary School in Auckland, recalled that one of her teachers was rapped by ERO 'for not having procedures on feeding goldfish'.[15]

One paradoxical effect of the ERO was to create certain nostalgia for the old inspectors. 'We used to have one attached to the school, and he got personally involved in what was going on', recalled Ashley Blair, principal of Cannon's Creek School in Porirua. 'He had educational vision and was my mentor. He didn't just carry out a cold and impersonal inspection'.[16]

The ERO as conscience of the system

As a review agency that is independent of both the Ministry of Education and schools and that reports directly to the minister of education, ERO has no direct impact on the policies proposed and implemented by the ministry. Indeed, as noted above, Parliament specifically prohibited the agency from offering comments on the quality of the advice that the ministry provided to the minister, a function that was part of its original mandate under Tomorrow's Schools.

Nevertheless, Aitken's vision for the Educational Review Office extended beyond its role as monitor of individual schools, and she chose to use the power and visibility of ERO in an indirect manner to challenge national education policies and to focus public attention on large structural problems encompassing groups of schools. As Aitken put it in a conversation with the authors: 'It has been a struggle to get the Ministry [of Education] to understand that the school is not a great unit to focus on. Compare the successful firm. It has a lot of vertical and horizontal linkages to other firms'.[17]

Consistent with her view that the problems facing many of the schools were too large to be addressed by the schools alone, Aitken convinced her divided agency to publish a series of high-profile reports on particular groups of struggling schools. The first and most controversial of these reports emerged in 1996 and focused on the forty-five schools in the two South Auckland suburbs of Mangere and Otara, most of which served highly disadvantaged and overwhelmingly minority student bodies. The report described the region as an educational disaster area characterized by rampant governance and management failure. Specifically, it said that 42% of the schools in these areas were performing very poorly or were under-performing and that 27% were in the highest category of risk because they had required at least one follow-up review by ERO. Trying to be constructive, the ERO couched its policy recommendations in ways that it hoped would be acceptable to a ministry not inclined towards intervention. For example, it called for the establishment of a strategic development centre that would serve as a broker for the management services needed by the South Auckland Schools, exit incentives for poor teachers, and recruitment incentives for new, higher quality teachers.

The report was met with outrage in South Auckland. The local principals, including principals at schools that the ERO judged to be relatively successful, were distressed at the agency's apparent insensitivity to the severity of the educational challenges they faced, many of which they linked to middle-class flight that was well beyond the power of schools to control. The two teachers' unions and the principals' association were also angered at what they viewed as unfair criticisms of schools and teachers. Parents, too, thought the report was unfair on the ground that it inappropriately singled out their schools for criticism. In addition, academics criticized the report on grounds similar to those raised by the principals: that it failed to take sufficient account of the context in which the schools operate and focused its recommendations too much on management issues.

The report had a major impact on discussions within the ministry and ultimately prompted the government to establish a US$10 million programme aimed at assisting troubled urban schools. Contrary to the hopes of the ERO, however, the ministry did not adopt any of its proposals related to teacher recruitment, opting instead for a focus on management and community engagement. Subsequent reports of this type focused on twenty rural schools in the East Coast and seventy-eight schools in Northland—areas that, like South Auckland, have high proportions of minority group and low-income students. The East Coast report has encouraged the ministry to consider new ways of organizing school resources in that area, including new forms of shared administration.

The ERO as promoter of good educational practices

Under Judith Aitken, the Educational Review Office also carved out a role for itself as the provider of information aimed at helping schools do their jobs more effectively. Using the information it gleaned from its individual school reports, agency staff members drew conclusions about what works and what does not work in schools and issued periodic reports aimed at principals, teachers and members of boards of trustees *(Professional leadership in primary schools, Core competencies for school principals* and *The capable teacher)*. Other such reports were addressed to parents *(Choosing a school for a five-year old* and *Choosing a secondary school)*, while still others were focused on general issues related to teaching and learning *(Addressing barriers to learning and students at risk)*. All are public documents available on the Internet.

An official review of the ERO in 1997 praised these publications and reported that they were highly regarded among educators and that they had generated useful debate on a variety of issues.[18] An alternative perspective on these reports appears in a 1997 analysis of the ERO commissioned by the Post Primary Teachers' Association.[19] The authors criticize the ERO for promoting a 'good practice' model of schooling that is conservative, rather than a 'best practice' model, which they argue would be potentially more progressive. They also assert that while the ERO claims that its reports are asocial and apolitical, they define the concept of a good teacher and a good school through a set of middle-class lenses.

Policy issues raised

We have characterized New Zealand's approach to the balancing of self-governance and accountability as a tight-loose-tight system under which the purposes of education are defined by the centre, schools are given considerable latitude in deciding how to go about achieving these purposes, and the centre then evaluates the extent to which schools succeed in meeting agreed-upon educational goals. Such a system makes intuitive sense and is probably the only rational way to reconcile operational autonomy and accountability—at least in principle. As we have seen, however, New Zealand encountered challenges in connection with each of the three elements.

TIGHT MISSIONS

Charter documents were originally intended to articulate a vision for local schools that would affirm both national and local goals and, in the process, become a basis for accountability. They failed to serve that purpose, however, largely because they lacked the necessary specificity. The national goals were broadly defined with no measurable objectives and the local goals were typically quite homogenous and, again, not specific and measurable.

LOOSE OPERATIONAL CONTROL

Although the Tomorrow's Schools reforms represented an affirmation of the capacity of local schools to manage their own affairs, it turned out that a significant minority of schools, most visibly those serving low-income students, needed far more than operational autonomy and good management to be successful. These schools also needed outside assistance in forms ranging from financial support for special programmes for at-risk students to professional development of teachers.

New Zealand's decision to introduce an arms-length accountability system—and thus an explicit policy that ERO would not provide direct assistance to schools—became highly problematic. Largely due to the public nature of the ERO reporting system, it became evident that many schools in New Zealand were struggling under the burdens of self-governance. It then became reasonable to ask what provisions the government had established to assure that struggling or weak schools get the special support they need to carry out their roles as agents in an effective manner and to correct the deficiencies identified by the ERO. Strikingly, there was little room in New Zealand's conception of decentralized school governance for the buttressing of weak schools.

In partial recognition of this shortcoming, one review of the Education Review Office recommended that, as a normal part of its reporting procedure, the ERO include a section on the sources of advice and guidance available in the local area. More significantly, it recommended that the Ministry of Education 'establish a range of actions to assist schools where action is required to improve the management and delivery of education'.[20]

By the late 1990s, the non-interventionist stance on the part of the Ministry of Education became untenable in the face of mounting evidence that some schools were failing for reasons that included forces outside their control. Officials reluctantly began to develop strategies for intervening in South Auckland and other distressed areas.

One lesson from New Zealand is that both functions—external monitoring and school support—are important and that institutions need to be in place to accomplish both of them. While a public agency must assume direct responsibility for the monitoring function, support functions could be provided by one or more outside agencies, either non-profit or profit-making. The government, however, has a clear responsibility to assure that such support is available to all schools.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR OUTCOMES

The Education Review Office has been criticized for its focus on administrative and educational processes rather than on student outcomes. To be sure, some of the processes are related to outcomes, such as whether the curriculum is being delivered and whether boards of trustees have any way of knowing what the students are learning. Nonetheless, the reviews often became mechanistic, were heavily focused on management procedures, and did not necessarily foster better educational outcomes. Moreover, the ERO provided no evidence in support of its general view that 'the quality of school governance and management is a reliable indicator of the quality of educational services provided'.[21]

Most people, including Judith Aitken, acknowledge that the absence of compulsory national tests hindered the accountability process. At the same time, New Zealanders have some serious concerns about introducing such tests. They fear that they will narrow the curriculum and that they will be misused both by the ERO and the public in evaluating schools. The concern about misuse springs from the observation that average test scores across schools are highly correlated with the socio-economic mix of students in the school. Unless sufficient testing is done to permit value-added calculations, or comparisons are only made between schools with a comparable mix of students, test results may provide misleading information on a school's effectiveness.

Even if national test results were available, however, a strong case can still be made for the inspectorate model. One reason for this is that the concepts of outcomes and school processes may not be as distinct as the tight-loose-tight governance structure would require. The public has an interest in assuring good processes as well as good outcomes and in strengthening the links between the two. For example, although a healthy and safe school environment is not a measure of educational outcomes, it is of considerable importance to the public. In addition, the public has an interest in assuring that a school is complying with the terms of its charter and with any legal requirements. Is it offering the type of instruction specified in the agreement? Is it able to assemble the appropriate staff? Are its interactions with parents consistent with the agreement?

Another set of issues relating to the maintenance of 'tight' accountability was raised by the public nature of the ERO reports on local schools. Are the outcomes of such a public process always the appropriate ones? Do the public reports always elicit the desired behaviour? And are they fair?

To the extent that the reports focus on the symptoms of much larger problems outside the control of the schools, they may do a disservice to the school's officials, as was argued by the South Auckland principals in response to the report on their schools. In addition, the distinction between managerial effectiveness and teaching quality can be important. The danger is that a school—and the principal and teachers within it—get a bad rap in the press because of managerial ineffectiveness even though it may be providing a reasonable level of educational services. The principals also complained that follow-up reports by ERO on troubled schools tended to stress continuing deficiencies while minimizing steps that had been taken to deal with them.

Two reviews of the ERO came to opposite conclusions about the relative benefits and costs of the use of public information as a policy lever. One report commissioned by the teachers' union highlighted the concerns of teachers that media reporting tends to be fragmentary, negative in tone and 'crisis-oriented'. It argued that public reports on failing schools, many of which serve disadvantaged students, are likely to exacerbate the decline of students from such schools, thereby compounding their problems.[22]

The second report, an official review of the ERO, fully endorsed the agency's legal obligation to make all final reports available to the media while suggesting procedural changes designed to minimize adverse effects of the sort that had been occurring in the past. These changes would include a longer time for schools to respond to the initial report so that they would be ready with action plan to address the report's recommendations. The final version would include not only the school's action plan, but also an introduction prepared by the school describing the context in which it operated, brief details of significant achievements since the last review and issues on which the school was working.[23]

Looking ahead[24]

The points made in these reviews and reflected in studies by Wylie and others have not gone unnoticed. In December 1999 a new Labour Government assumed power in New Zealand, and its Minister of Education, Trevor Mallard, appointed a five-member ministerial review committee to take a hard look at the functioning of the Educational Review Office. Mallard specifically asked the committee to consider whether the State education system would be better served if the ERO were incorporated into the Ministry of Education.

In its report, titled 'Ministerial Review of the Education Review Office' and issued in February 2001, the committee concluded that the ERO had made a valuable contribution to the encouragement of compliance and accountability on the part of schools and early childhood centres and that it should remain a stand-alone agency. At the same time, the report suggested that the ERO and the ministry should establish a system for working together on matters of common interest.

The review committee also took note of complaints that the ERO, while zealous in pointing out deficiencies, provided schools with little in the way of constructive criticism, especially those serving Maoris and Pacific Islanders. The report called for an 'assess and assist' model under which ERO reviews would focus not so much on the failures of schools but on ways that they might improve. It urged the agency to provide follow-up assistance to schools in the form of workshops and visits to monitor progress. Under such a model, inspectors would pay increased attention to self-reviews by the staff of schools they were appraising, and the teams would be required to include at least one professional educator chosen by the school being reviewed. The net effect of such a model would be to nudge the accountability system back toward the 'professional' model that had been explicitly rejected by the Picot Task Force.

How far New Zealand will retreat from the arms-length monitoring model remains to be seen. Not everyone agrees that providing advice is an appropriate role for the ERO. Were the ERO to become a purveyor of advice as well as criticism, at least one pair of observers suggested, 'Over time, a likely consequence will be for ERO to reduce the power, incisiveness and boldness of its recommendations in order to increase the likelihood that its advice is seen to be successful'.[25] They argue instead that advice and assistance should be provided by 'other agencies with specific skills and experience' in particular areas of education.

Conclusion

Based on New Zealand's experience, we endorse in principal the basic model of a tight-loose-tight approach to school governance and the inspectorate approach to accountability, but we emphasize the difficulties of carrying out that approach in practice. Some of the shortcomings with respect to accountability that arose in the New Zealand context did so because of the absence of nationally uniform measures of student performance. While other countries could readily address that particular shortcoming by requiring external testing of students—ideally in a form that permitted a focus on gains in test scores rather than levels—other challenges would remain.

These challenges arise in part from the fact that educational outcomes are not as readily distinguishable from school processes as the pure tight-loose-tight model would imply. In order to address that problem within an inspectorate model of the New Zealand type, school charters could be required to specify process as well as outcome goals. For such charter documents to serve as the basis of accountability, however, they would need to include clear objectives related to the various goals that were sufficiently specific to be measurable. For goals that are set nationally, the additional issue of the adequacy of funding arises, since it would be unfair to hold schools accountable for outcomes and processes for which the schools had inadequate resources to achieve.

As we have described, New Zealand continues to grapple with whether it makes sense to separate cleanly the function of monitoring and accountability from the function of support and advice. One of the main lessons we draw from New Zealand's experience in this regard is that arms-length monitoring, by itself, will not assure that self-governing schools will provide quality education. Quality education will also require significant assistance and support for struggling schools. Failure to provide that assistance and support in some form could make any arms-length accountability system punitive rather than a constructive force for school improvement.

Notes

1. Edward B. Fiske and Helen F. Ladd, *When schools compete: a cautionary tale*, Washington, DC, Brookings Institution, 2000, Ch. 2.
2. A third set of forces, which we describe as the New Right-Market current, also played a role, but most directly when full parental choice of schools was introduced in 1991.
3. Task Force to Review Education Administration, *Administering for excellence: effective administration in education*, p. 35–36, sec. 3.6.1, 3.6.6, Wellington, 1988.
4. Task Force, op. cit., sec. 1.4.5.
5. It should be noted that two years after decentralization, in 1991, a newly elected nation-

al government that was committed to new right social and political principles introduced further structural reforms to the State school system consistent with a market-oriented approach to the delivery of public services. The national government abolished enrolment zones and gave parents a voice in choosing which primary or secondary school their child would attend—thus forcing schools to compete for students in an educational agora.
6. Initially called the Review and Audit Agency.
7. Task Force, op. cit., p. xi.
8. *Tomorrow's schools: the reforming of education administration in New Zealand*, 1988. Wellington, sec. 1.1.7.
9. Liz Gordon, 1992, The state, devolution and educational reform in New Zealand, *Journal of education policy* (Basingstoke, United Kingdom), vol. 7, no. 2, p. 195.
10. Fiske & Ladd, op. cit., p. 121.
11. This study was based on responses to reviews by principals who were members of the New Zealand Principals Federation who had undergone an ERO review in 1995/96. The sample was reasonably representative, with some under-representation of city schools and of very small schools. Cathy Wylie, *Primary principals' experiences of ERO reviews, 1995–96*, Wellington, New Zealand Council for Educational Research, no date.
12. Fiske & Ladd, op. cit., p. 123.
13. Fiske & Ladd, op. cit., p. 123–24.
14. This review was based on an analysis of documents supplemented by school and regional case studies and a survey of schools. Auckland Uniservices Limited, *A review of ERO: final report to the PPTA*, Auckland, 1997.
15. Fiske & Ladd, op. cit., p. 123.
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21. Education Review Office, *Annual report*, p. 6, Wellington, 1994.
22. Auckland Uniservices Limited, op. cit.
23. *Achieving excellence*, op. cit.
24. The final section is based on articles in the *New Zealand education review* (Wellington), issues of 16 February and 30 March 2001.
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SCHOOL AUTONOMY AND EVALUATION

ON THE POLITICS OF PERFORMANCE IN SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION: AUTONOMY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND ASSESSMENT

Jonathan D. Jansen

Introduction

There is a small but important literature (Edwards, Nicoll & Tait, 1999; McClaren, 1998; Jansen, 2001) on the ways in which particular discourses about teaching and learning emerge within education systems as a consequence of the increasing integration of such systems under globalization. This literature holds that globalization is not simply a process of *economic integration* on a planetary scale in real time (Carnoy, 2000), but also a process of *educational integration* that is reflected in trans-national discourses about educational events such as assessment and examinations (Edwards & Usher, 1997). Third World States at the margins of globalization are not immune to this process of educational integration (Jansen, 2000). A partic-

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ularly powerful measure of this process is the concept of *performance*, which remains a pervasive expression of South Africa's integration into the economic, political and cultural logic of globalization.

I will begin this article by describing the ways in which the discourse of *performance* emerged within the South African context after the legal termination of *apartheid* during the early 1990s, the inauguration of the first democratic and non-racial government in April 1994 under the presidency of Nelson Mandela, and the installation of a new education system starting in late 1994. The discussion is then advanced in an analysis of a particular instance of educational reform in which the discourse and practice of *performance* is prominently expressed, i.e. the new national policy on whole-school evaluation. I conclude by drawing the connections among the theory, politics and epistemology of *performance* within the South African education system, and its implications for educational change after *apartheid*.

The policy context and the emergence of performance assessment

The history of struggle against *apartheid* was marked by an emphasis on democratic participation, on consultative processes, on an ethos of community (rather than the individual), and on the value of collective experience (ANC, 1994). The Yellow Book, regarded as the base document of the African National Congress[1] on education and on which all major government education policies since 1994 have been built, claims that:

> We are committed to an open and publicly accountable process of policy development. Indeed the democratization of the policy process and of the education and training system as a whole lies at the heart of our policy framework. In this respect, the framework builds on processes already underway which point to the democratization of the system [...] Participatory, consensus-building policy development [is something] from which we have learned much (ANC 1994, p. 5).

It was surprising, therefore, that the first official policy documents of the new State were premised on statements of final outcomes, on expert-driven change, on a 'top-down' policymaking apparatus that marginalized stakeholder involvement in the planning and execution of educational change, and on individual and institutional performance (Nxesi, 2001; Jansen, 2001).

In its general curriculum vision, the State adopted an educational philosophy called outcomes-based education (OBE) that permeated all education and training policies. As I have shown elsewhere, the precise origins of OBE in South Africa is unclear (Jansen, 1999), but its central tenet is that the entire education system should be re-engineered away from an emphasis on what the teacher or curriculum 'covers' in a period of instructional time, towards what learners can actually do (perform or demonstrate) as a result of certain educational inputs.

The school curriculum plan, called Curriculum 2005, listed sixty-six specific outcomes that signal levels of performance that learners were to achieve at various stages of their schooling. These specific outcomes derived from twelve legislated 'critical cross-field outcomes'[2] that were to guide curriculum planning across all levels of the education and training system. The 'norms and standards' for teacher education lists more than 140 'competences' that teachers and teacher educators should achieve as professionals.[3] The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is in the process of implementing a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) that lists specific outcomes that must be achieved at different levels of the system, as well as 'associated assessment criteria' for determining whether individual learner performance demonstrates that such outcomes have in fact been attained. Accordingly, universities and technikons are required to submit all their qualifications in an outcomes-based format that specifies levels of performance for each outcome. In short, from primary education through higher education, from the first week in grade one to the final year of doctoral studies, students are required to perform on the basis of officially adopted *outcomes*.

The emphasis on performance was by no means limited to the curriculum vision of the post-*apartheid* State for the individual learner. Outcomes have also become the standard against which institutional performance is measured. The new National Plan on Higher Education (NPHE) introduces a new framework for assessing individual universities and technikons on the basis of institutional performance measured against sixteen specified outcomes. To ensure the achievement of these outcomes, specific 'levers' are identified by government to 'push' institutions in the direction of these outcomes (South Africa, 2001). Institutions are required, therefore, to specify employment targets or outcomes for staff equity in their strategic plans that are submitted on a three-year basis to government. Institutions are required to improve efficiency against specified targets for annual graduation of undergraduate students. Institutional performance in terms of research outputs becomes the new basis for calculating further State funding for research. Institutions are also required to specify higher levels of postgraduate student enrolments, and to achieve those levels of performance or face punitive sanction in terms of State funding. In the short history of higher education in South Africa, such tight control over autonomous institutions is unprecedented, even when compared to the obsessive years of State power under *apartheid*.

The obsession with performance naturally led to a broader public interest in measuring and ranking educational institutions. The *Sunday Times* (South Africa) assembled two powerful panels, one to measure the performance of higher education institutions, and the other to rank the top 100 schools in South Africa. The higher education assessment had expert support from South Africa's leading think tank on universities and technikons, the Council on Higher Education Transformation (CHET). The measures of performance were telling: Higher education institutions were ranked, we are told, in terms of efficiency rather than quality, the focus being on how well institutional resources were managed. There was a problem, of course, in applying a standard measure of efficiency given the vast disparities in resources and capacity between white and black universities in South Africa, a direct legacy of *apartheid*. Data, for example, were not collected in a systematic manner. One panellist complained: 'There are few countries in the world that would accept a situation in which *a performance study* has to rely on 1996 data. The incomplete returns for 1997 reflect badly on institutions' (Ian Bunting in Pretorius, 1998, p. 2; emphasis added). The measurement of school performance invested heavily in 'pass rates' with some moderation applied due to 'contextual factors', such as the race and socio-economic background of learners. Even with such moderation, white schools completely dominated the list of 100 schools given the significance of the weighting of this prominent measure of efficiency: pass rates. But the listing of the top 100 schools is only one part of a public process of measurement. Worse, the government decided to also provide a public listing of the worst schools in each of the nine provinces—obviously all black. Such 'black-listing' of public schools was intended, no doubt, to bring public pressure and scrutiny to bear on these institutions with the somewhat dubious goal of improving performance.

Another expression of this obsession with performance is South Africa's enthusiastic participation in international and comparative studies of achievement. South Africa is one of the few African countries involved in the TIMSS (Third International Mathematics and Science Study) and TIMSS-Repeat studies that measure grade eight learner performance in science and mathematics across thirty-eight countries. South Africa also participates in the so-called 'monitoring of learning achievement' studies of UNESCO that compares literacy and numeracy levels among grade four learners. The results of these studies make for intense and extended discussion in the media (alongside ratings on the world competitiveness scale) about South Africa's relative position with respect to learner performance.

In a short period of time, therefore, an anti-*apartheid* politics premised on *the primacy of process* had been displaced by a post-*apartheid* politics premised on *the primacy of performance*. Such performance was to be measured in terms of discrete outcomes using specified assessment criteria. This orientation in the post-*apartheid* education and training system had pervaded every major policy position of the new State. I now turn to a detailed analysis of the politics of performance in South African education using the new policy on whole-school evaluation as a case in point.

The national policy on whole-school evaluation

In June 2000, the new Minister of Education (Professor Kader Asmal)[4] introduced the National Policy on Whole-School Evaluation (NPWSE) as follows:

> This national policy on whole-school evaluation introduces an effective monitoring and evaluation process that is vital to the improvement of quality and standards of performance in schools [...] The findings must be used to re-orientate efforts towards improving the quality and standards of individual and collective performance (South Africa. Department of Education, 2000, p. 7).

It was immediately clear from this policy that institutional (the school) and professional (the teacher) performance would, for the first time, be brought into sharp and systematic focus under the new South African Government. The key proposals in the policy are the following:

- That schools will initiate a process of *self-evaluation* during which each school 'provide[s] an account of their current performance' (Department of Education 2000, p. 11). In this process,
- 'All members of a school should take responsibility for the quality of their own performance. Whole-school evaluation seeks to measure the contribution of both staff and pupils to the school's and their own performance' (p. 12).
- That schools are then subject to a *pre-evaluation survey* by an accredited supervisor 'to build a brief profile about the general level of functionality of the school' (p. 15). During this visit the self-evaluation reports, along with other school records, are used to generate the school profile.
- That schools are then reviewed and assessed through an *external evaluation* process by four to six accredited supervisors over a period of three to four weekdays targeting nine focus areas (such as learner achievement) with follow-up surveys (if necessary) every six to nine months in the context of three-year evaluation cycles.
- That schools are supported through a *post-evaluation process* by district support teams 'to implement the recommendations of the evaluation report through school improvement planning that sets clear targets, priorities, time frames and resource allocation' (p. 16).

The key areas for evaluation are the following:

- Basic functionality of the school.
- Leadership, management and communication.
- Governance and relationships.
- Quality of teaching and educator development.
- Curriculum provision and resources.
- Learner achievement.
- School safety, security and discipline.
- School infrastructure.
- Parents and community.

The evaluation will be based on three types of indicators, namely, input indicators (such as learner characteristics, funding levels and number of staff), process indicators (such as quality of teaching) and output indicators (such as standards of achievement and attendance rates). There are discrete 'performance ratings' that will be used on a scale of 1–5 with '1' signifying an 'unacceptable' rating and '5' an 'outstanding' score.

The policy on whole-school evaluation, as described above, is important because of the ways in which its frames the discourse of performance in South African schools. In this regard, there are several tensions that are generated in the policy proposals.

First, there is tension between school autonomy and state control. At a first glance, it appears that schools are being granted greater autonomy to decide on their own progress, plans and priorities for school improvement.[5] After all, it is the school that measures itself through the self-evaluation process, and these internal documents form the basis for subsequent external evaluations by departmental supervisors. Indeed, 'the authority for the professional management issues of the schools will be vested with the principal of the school, supported by the professional staff' (Department of Education, 2000, p. 20). This means that the principal and staff play a key role in the evaluation processes and in the production of a school improvement plan. Moreover, 'all evaluation activities must be characterised by openness and collaboration. The criteria to be used in evaluating schools, therefore, must be made public' (Department of Education, 2000, p. 12).

However, on closer observation, there are critical areas in which the school principal and staff are excluded from the evaluation process. Consider the following exemption regarding principals:

> S/he will participate in the evaluation process by attending meetings, interpreting evidence and clarifying uncertainties but will not be part of decision-making when judgments about the school's performance are made (Department of Education, 2000, p. 21).

In addition, while the co-operative aspects of the evaluation are listed throughout the key policy document, the external evaluators have legal authority to enter and act on a school. Accordingly,

> Through the legal responsibilities bestowed on the minister of education, accredited supervisors have the right to enter any school and carry out an evaluation (Department of Education, 2000, p. 13).

Furthermore, while schools may lay a complaint about 'unfair treatment or unjustified action', the minister of education remains 'the final arbiter in any complaint's procedure' (Department of Education, 2000, p. 14).[6]

There is a second tension in the whole-school evaluation between development and accountability. On the one hand, the policy emphasizes the positive benefits for school improvement that comes through internal and external evaluation. Schools will receive district support and development assistance to implement their improvement plans. Schools with benefit from a budget provided to the district to assist implementation. Schools will be exposed to well-trained district officials who will monitor and evaluate the performance of each school. In the words of the minister:

> Whole-school evaluation is meant to be supportive and developmental rather than punitive and judgmental. It will not be used as a coercive measure, but will ensure that policies are complied with. It will also facilitate support and improvement of school performance using approaches of partnerships, collaboration, mentoring and guidance (Department of Education, 2000, p. 8).

But what happens if a school does not attain the levels of performance articulated in school improvement plans? Here the policy faces a credibility crisis among practitioners. The largest teacher's union in the country, the South African Democratic

Teachers Union (SADTU), has dismissed the policy as nothing more than the old 'inspection system' used under *apartheid* to force schools into compliance with the State's philosophy and curriculum. The 'inspection system' remains a powerful lens through which the unions interpret this new policy, even though the minister promises that it is 'less punitive' (Department of Education, 2000, p. 7).

Since new policies are interpreted in relation to other existing policies, there is the added problem that the matriculation examination results are in fact used to blacklist under-performing schools in a very public and humiliating process. Indeed, the minister's report on examination results places considerable emphasis on the number of under-performing schools in the system—which are listed by name and with all their results.[7] It is difficult, therefore, to convince practitioners that the policy on whole-school evaluation will not result in some form of reprimand or exposure given how other policies are being implemented in South Africa. The exclusion of school staff from final judgements on their performance does not help to build a developmental understanding of the new policy.

At the end of the day, this new policy, in its own words, is about using performance as a measure of compliance and accountability of the school system to national policy. The policy aims:

- To increase the level of accountability within the system (Department of Education, 2000, p. 11).
- To show to what extent [schools] satisfy the expectations of government and the public and how well they are responding to their accountability for the outcomes of schooling (p. 11).
- To ensure that policies are complied with (p. 8, 9).

There are political consequences if a lack of compliance with national policy and the constitution is observed; thus, 'should the evaluation reveal problems in complying with the provisions of the constitution, the political head of education in the affected province would have to account to the minister in writing within ninety days' (Department of Education, 2000, p. 9).

The meaning and implications of a performance-driven pedagogy

As noted earlier, the rise of performance-based pedagogies is part and parcel of a broader set of globalization discourses that have come to characterize educational reforms in South Africa and elsewhere. Indeed, a casual search of the Internet will yield 746,000 Web page matches on 'performance-based education.' The trans-national dissemination and adoption of discourses about flexibility, performance, terminal outcomes, quality assurance, efficiency, lifelong learning, standards-based assessment, competency, modular education, and national qualifications frameworks are not coincidental. Rather, globalization discourses about this trans-cultural pedagogy are made possible through the incorporation of economic (and, to some extent, political) systems under contracted conditions of time and space made possible by new technologies.[8] South Africa, as I have shown elsewhere, has inserted itself selfconsciously within this pervasive discourse about globalization and associated pedagogies (Jansen, 2000, p. 6), even though its realization in classroom practice has yet to be observed.

But for a country on the margins of globalization, operating under typical Third World conditions and with a recent history of racial oppression and inequality, what are the implications of performance assessment (or performativity, as Lyotard [1984] called it) for educational change?

First, the national obsession with *educational outputs* diverts attention from the *educational inputs* required to redress the historical inequalities that continue to bedevil the education system after *apartheid*. Citing the size of the teacher salary budget, in excess of 80% of the national budget for education, government acknowledges the lack of resources for learning materials, teacher training, school infrastructure and upgrading, and curriculum development. For all the policy hype about performance and delivery as an end product, there has not been a proportional investment in educational inputs. A very good example is the national policy on whole-school evaluation. There simply is no way in which government will be able to generate the kind of budget that can provide four to six trained and accredited supervisors to 29,000 schools every three years for three to four weekdays per year to cover nine focus areas in multiple school subjects. Yet, if the policy is to be believed, schools and their inhabitants are required to nevertheless perform according to clearly defined outcomes.

Second, the national obsession with standardized performance threatens to undermine fundamental commitments to equity. What a standardized measure of performance means is that all teachers or learners or schools, irrespective of their history, resources or capacity, are required to attain the same levels of achievement. In another context, writes Blake, 'performativity obscures differences, requiring everything to be commensurable with everything else, so that things can be ranked on the same scale and everyone can be "accountable" against the same standards. This in turn entails the devaluing, and perhaps the eradication of what cannot be ranked' (Blake et al., 1998). In South Africa, a white urban school with middle-class parents, an established school infrastructure, and an elite group of advantaged students, is measured on exactly the same basis as a black rural school serving the children of poor families in dilapidated buildings where a poor 'culture of teaching and learning' exists. Worse, as recent studies have shown, new policies in fact increase the distance between rich and poor schools because of the capacity of the former to manage, interpret and implement the policy in its favour. Again, whole-school evaluation will be implemented with well-trained teachers (and possibly external consultants) who would provide detailed school improvement plans that will be systematically implemented to ensure progress beyond already high levels of achievement. Most schools, black and poor, are unlikely to contain or receive such expert levels of support from the government. In short, the equity gap will in fact increase *because of* policy, and the end measures of performance will remain silent on variables such as 'opportunity to learn' or constructs such as 'contextual validity' (Jansen & Christie, 1999).

Third, the national obsession with performance based on measurable outcomes tends to overlook the many different ways in which schools, teachers and learners can 'perform'. This fact may explain the tendency of South African policymakers to over-specify outcome statements for the sake of completion. There are sixty-six learning outcomes in the new curriculum and the 140 'competences' for teachers are vivid illustrations of this problem. The problem, of course, is that once specification begins, there is an infinite list of outcomes or behaviours that can reasonably be stated for individuals or institutions. The result, inevitably, is a long list of behavioural outcomes that is unmanageable, dense and bureaucratic—and, therefore, difficult, if not impossible, to implement.

Fourth, the national obsession with performance privileges external behaviours that are easily 'codified' into discrete outcomes. In the words of the most prominent advocate of outcomes-based education:

> Outcomes are CLEAR, OBSERVABLE DEMONSTRATIONS of student learning that occur at or after the end of a significant set of learning experiences. They are NOT values, attitudes, feelings, beliefs, activities, assignments, goals, scores, marks, or averages, as many people believe (Spady, 1998, p. 3, emphasis in the original).

Yet, not everything worth doing in schools can be measured in a set of discrete outcomes. Schools, therefore, that build strong cultures of anti-racism among learners, or who foster democratic participation in the community, or who build co-operative cultures among teachers, or demonstrate high levels of curriculum innovation, are not taken as seriously in the performance as than those who can demonstrate high levels of achievement on measurable outcomes. Despite the acknowledgment of input and process variables, the demands for compliance and accountability in an education system that privileges high-stakes examinations at the end of schooling, almost certainly means that undisputed measures of 'output variables' will be more highly valued under whole-school evaluation.

Fifth, the emphasis on measured performance in an outcomes-based system leads to and encourages the fragmentation of knowledge into 'bits and pieces' of manageable 'things'. Reflecting on the experience of one of many standards generation bodies (SGBs) in South Africa, Wally Morrow recalls:

> By far the most fundamental difficulties have been epistemological—namely the conception of knowledge, which, not clearly articulated, weaves through the discourse(s) [...] At the root of this epistemology lies an atomised conception of knowledge ('bits' of knowledge), the assumption that all knowledge has the same logical form, and a conviction that all language is 'transparent' and merely a tool for naming an independent reality (Morrow, 2001, p. 11).

Sixth, the emphasis on performance at the end of a process deflects attention from the meaning and value of the ends themselves. Not once in the South African policymaking experience has there been a broad and sustained debate on 'what is worth learning' in schools and universities. Rather, having defined the 'ends' or 'outcomes', the task that remained was to find the most efficient ways of becoming good at achieving those ends or demonstrating the outcomes. The point is not simply a procedural one; it is a political concern, for at the root of all curriculum planning is the deeper question: 'What knowledge is of the most worth'? On the other hand, 'Under performativity, deliberation over ends is eclipsed [....] All kinds of business and activity are measured and ranked against each other, with ever less concern for the rationale for doing so' (Blake et al., 1998).

Conclusion

The South African obsession with performance-based pedagogies, as I have shown, has negative implications for resolving equity problems in educational reforms; it threatens to negate a political debate about 'goals' in favour of a technician's debate about 'ends'; and it fragments knowledge into meaningless tasks that assign value to external behaviours rather than the multiplicity of ways in which learning and valuing can be experienced (if not always expressed). The real danger to building a strong democratic culture through education is that what should be vibrant debates about 'what's worth knowing' could be effectively silenced in a performance assessment system that only values, through a complex assessment system, that which is worth doing. Such an understanding of education is, unfortunately, entrenched in a global network of economic and technological processes that make such pursuits appear both normal and inevitable.

Notes

1. The African National Congress (ANC) is the former exiled liberation movement and now dominant political party in South Africa, of which Nelson Mandela was president. In both post-*apartheid* elections (1994 and 1999), the ANC won close to two-thirds of the popular vote, giving it a dominant political role inside and outside government. Despite its more radical tradition from its days in exile, the ANC as well as the ANC-dominated government is now regarded as having much more 'moderate' economic policies—a result of many factors, including political settlement in 1994 with the white minority government and economic settlement with powerful international forces that moderate the South African State and economy after the collapse of communism.
2. The twelve 'critical cross-field outcomes' are generic statements of performance that hold across levels of learning (different school grades) and kinds of educational programmes (science or languages). Among these generic outcomes are critical, problem solving skills and learning to work in teams.
3. The regulated performer in the so-called 'norms and standards' has seven well-described roles, each broken down into three broad 'applied competences' (practical, foundational and reflexive), each of these broken down into about 140 'discrete competences'. For example, the role described as *community, citizenship and pastoral role* requires that 'the educator will practise and promote a critical, committed and ethical attitude towards developing a sense of respect and responsibility towards others. The educator will uphold the constitution and promote democratic values and practices in schools and society. Within the school, the educator will demonstrate an ability to develop a

supportive and empowering environment for the learner and respond to the educational and other needs of learners and fellow educators'.

4. The first post-*apartheid* minister of education under the Mandela Administration was Professor Sibusiso Bengu who held the post from 1994–99. Professor Kader Asmal became the second minister of education since 1999. Both ministers are members of the dominant African National Congress.
5. Traditionally, South Africa's public schools have had very little autonomy in deciding on curriculum or staffing or school finance and organization. These common areas of school operations were tightly controlled by the *apartheid* government through direct political surveillance in schools, as well as through a host of legislative arrangements. After 1994, when the new government of Nelson Mandela was installed, schools had much greater freedom in deciding on curriculum, pedagogy and even as to how many additional teachers could be appointed using school-generated revenue. In practice, the former white schools, where the class base of the parents was generally quite high, were able to use these democratic spaces to a much greater degree than their black counterparts.
6. This discussion on the tension between autonomy and accountability will play itself out very differently in practice, if recent experience with curriculum change is a guide. That is, while formal policy stipulates certain behaviour from practitioners, the lack of resources for school-by-school surveillance often leads to schools 'doing their own thing' with respect to implementation, including sustaining the status quo. Further research is required on the de facto expression of formal policies in post-*apartheid* classrooms.
7. The school test results are published first in an official government listing, which are then often published in part by the national and regional media, often as part of a general report on extreme performances (the best and worst performing schools).
8. In this respect, it is useful to distinguish 'internationalization' from 'globalization'. The former represents a long historical process in which States have imitated each other in adopting, for example, mass education or subject-based curricula. The latter represents a more recent and complex process in which new educational forms represent an expression of the contracted economic conditions in which States function.

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SCHOOL AUTONOMY AND EVALUATION

SCHOOL EVALUATION IN CHILE: THE CASE OF SNED

Juan Casassus[1]

One of the criticisms levelled at educational reform[2] has been that significant increases in national education budgets have not been reflected in any notable improvement in pupil achievement. In a review of recent literature on the subject, Mizala and Romaguera (2000) argue that what is needed is a better system of incentives for pupils, teachers and management in state schools. Nevertheless, the debate on the advantages and disadvantages of incentive systems has not been conclusive. Criticism has focused on merit pay,[3] noting that individual merit pay has two important shortcomings. One is that it is very difficult to make a clear association between pupil achievement and a specific teacher. The other is that the system encourages opportunistic individualism in teachers and generates a competitive style that has an adverse effect on the climate in schools, a factor that is considered central to improving the quality of education (UNESCO, 2000). In Chile, an incentive system has been developed that works differently. The School Evaluation System does not focus on individual teachers, but rather rewards management effectiveness in a school and the work of the teaching staff as a whole.

The Chilean education system has a unique combination on the one hand of mechanisms encouraging competition among schools and on the other of central government support. School administration has been decentralized to municipal and

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private institutions known as 'providers', who are responsible to the State for keeping the school running. The system thus consists of subsidized non-fee-paying schools (municipal and private), private fee-paying schools and the bodies that administer technical and vocational secondary schools. It is managed by the Ministry of Education, both centrally (in Santiago) and in the country's thirteen administrative regions. Various kinds of information systems have been set up to assist in the management process, including measuring and evaluation systems which are primarily intended to improve decision-making.

The measuring and evaluation system which has evolved over time has four components: (i) the Academic Aptitude Test, created in 1967, which regulates entry into higher education, establishing the prerequisite of having completed secondary education; (ii) the System for Information on and Evaluation of Education Quality (SIMCE), which began life in 1982 under the name of PER. This system measures pupil's performance in the fourth and sixth grades of primary education and the second grade of secondary education; (iii) the Subsidized Schools Performance Evaluation System (SNED), created in 1995; and (iv) a system for evaluating education professionals individually, which is connected to the academic achievements of teachers (currently under discussion). The present article concentrates on SNED.

Education policy in Chile

The management of the education system is based on education policy. A panoramic view of the education policies that have been applied and have shaped the system can thus be expected to shed light on the present system of administration.

Education in Chile has long been an object of unremitting attention. For more than forty years, the education system has been constantly under observation and reform. We shall concentrate on the policies of the military regime (1973-89) and those of the democratic regime (1990-2001) that followed. The former concentrated on introducing a new administrative framework that weakened the role of the Ministry of Education. The latter were designed to improve the quality and equality of education, strengthening the Ministry of Education's capacity for intervention. There was continuity between the two regarding the general direction of the system's administration, but the focus of education policy, relations with civil society and the role of the ministry took a new turn.

Under the military regime, in a context of authoritarianism and rigid social control, educational reform was aimed at institutional change, in particular changes in the overall management framework.[4] The policies of the 1980s focused on reducing the sphere of influence of the Ministry of Education, and privatization and market forces were encouraged as a means of regulating and giving new impetus to education. However, this approach was adopted in the context of a bureaucratic, authoritarian State with markedly centralizing tendencies and supervised by the Ministry of the Interior,[5] which in effect put a damper on market forces.

When a democratic regime was established in 1990, it was decided not to change the system's administrative framework. Nevertheless, shortcomings with

TABLE 1. Comparison of educational policy under the military and democratic regimes.

Educational policy under the military regime 1973–89	Educational policy under the democratic regime 1990–2001
Decentralization. Public administration was reformed in 1980 with the introduction of the concept of the subsidiary State. Responsibility for school administration was devolved from central government to municipal authorities. In practice, the legal framework was not one of decentralizing, but of 'deconcentrating' the education system to municipal authorities, where the chief decision-makers were mayors appointed by the central government.[6] This was referred to as the 'municipalization' of education. Sixty per cent of schools in Chile are municipal schools.	*Decentralization.* State schools continued to be administered by the municipality, but efforts were made to give them more autonomy as regards the curriculum and fund-raising. As mayors are now elected by the general public, it is considered that municipal authorities are decentralized. 'Deconcentration' applies to the provincial and regional levels.
Market approach to education. The driving force of administrative reform was the introduction of a market approach to education, with a view to stimulating competition among schools, and the provision of private education was encouraged by the allocation of public funds to non-fee-paying private schools. This led to the emergence of subsidized private schools, under the responsibility of a State 'provider'. They account for 30% of schools.	*Market approach to education.* The system of subsidized private schools has been maintained, as has the spirit of competition among schools. Nevertheless, efforts are being made to strengthen the role of the state through compensatory programmes in the context of a policy of positive discrimination in favour of schools with low achievement levels in under-resourced areas. The education system is thus no longer regulated by market forces alone.
Subsidies based on demand. This policy was part of the privatization process by which the traditional form of funding, aligned on expenditure in the past, was replaced by a mechanism known as the Education Subsidy Unit (USE) whereby financial resources were allocated on the basis of pupil numbers,[7] the amount of USEs received by each school being determined on the basis of the average monthly pupil attendance. As a result, schools began to compete for pupils and made every effort to keep them in the classroom.	*Subsidies based on demand.* The USE funding system has been maintained. What has changed has been the priority given by the government to the education sector, reflected in a substantial increase in its budget. The increase affected the value of the USE, which went up from $8,000 in 1988 to $12,000 in 1996.[8]
Teachers' contracts. The 'municipalization' of education meant that teachers ceased to be civil servants and lost their status as teach-	*Teachers' contracts.* In 1991 a statute for teachers was approved, according to which central government intervenes in decisions

ers employed by the State. They became municipal employees, and the terms and conditions of their employment were negotiated as in the private sector.	affecting teaching staff, such as decisions on wages (setting a minimum wage), contracts and incentives (bonuses for experience, work in underprivileged areas, further training, and special responsibility).
Role of the State. The central ministry made institutional changes whereby it no longer carried out the functions of production, administration, provision and direct control, which were transferred to inspectors. Administrative responsibilities were transferred to the Ministry of the Interior, at the same time as competence in specific areas was 'deconcentrated' down to the municipal authorities. Privatization of the system was encouraged.	*Role of the State.* On the basis of the previous administrative structures, a proactive and more vigorous role is played by the State. The capacity of the centre, particularly its capacity to make policy and design curricula, intervene in schools, and conduct monitoring and evaluation, has been strengthened. The result is a two-way process in which greater decentralization is accompanied by greater centralization.
Management of the system. Management style was authoritarian and self-referential. Decentralization transferred responsibilities to the private sector and cut back the management functions of the central ministry. The policy focused on expanding the system, the overall regulation of which was conducted by prescriptive means, by resource allocation and by input management.	*Management of the system.* Management became more democratic and open to civil society, encouraging initiatives from stakeholders and operating by consensus, at the micro-level within the education community and at the macro-level with the demands of the new actors of civil society (production sectors, teachers' union, churches). The focus of the policy shifted towards quality and equality as regards the distribution of academic performance, so regulation was conducted by prescriptive means and by process and performance management, which required information and evaluation systems, and worked on the basis of incentives.

regard to the quality of the education provided and the evenness of its distribution made it necessary to increase the education budget and formulate compensatory policies. The policy of democratic governments has been aimed at improving the quality and equality of education by increasing the (meagre) education budget, improving the conditions of employment of teaching staff, focusing attention on under-resourced schools with poor academic performance, transforming curriculum content and improving quality in the system as a whole.

In short, education policy over the past thirty years in Chile has been concerned with improving the system mainly by generating changes in the overall framework of education. The assumption has been that if changes are introduced in management and the management environment, changes in processes and performance will follow. The new approach to management has involved: (i) introducing market mechanisms by allowing schools more room for manoeuvre and awarding subsidies on the basis of demand as a way of stimulating competition between schools; (ii) making management more flexible by opening schools up to the community and enabling greater participation by parents; and (iii) focusing the system's operation on the individual school. These institutional changes called for a mechanism producing information making it possible to monitor a system in which a large measure of management autonomy had been introduced. This led to the development of information, measuring and evaluation systems.

SNED

Decentralization creates the problem of how to manage a system in which, although schools are no longer the direct responsibility of the Ministry of Education, society as a whole persists in the belief that the central ministry is responsible for education and can therefore be held to account for it. A process of decentralization, involving competition between schools to improve the quality of the service and attract pupils thus co-exists with the centralizing rationale of education management. The measuring systems that have been developed in this context are seen as instruments for performance management; and it is on the basis of the information they provide that the central ministry allocates additional resources.

SNED was designed as part of a performance management policy within which it constitutes a framework for evaluating the individual performance of schools in a context of both decentralization and centralization. It is administered from the central ministry and its objective is to create a system of financial incentives and recognition for staff in the best-performing primary schools.

SNED was set up in 1995 by means of Law No. 19.410 to reward professional activity that helps to achieve the objectives of education policy. The law introduced a system of economic incentives for schools whose performance was considered to be outstanding. Known as Subsidies for Outstanding Performance, they take the form of a monthly sum per pupil. The teachers receive a bonus worth approximately $500, which is the same as an average monthly wage. The schools receiving this award must not account for more than 25% of the regional school roll. This means that, overall, these schools represent 25% of the country's subsidized schools, but no more than 25% of the total in any one of the administrative regions into which Chile is divided. Of the amount received, 90% must go to the educational professionals working in the selected schools, whilst the distribution of the remaining 10% is decided locally. The selection is made once every two years.

The system is administered by the Planning and Budget Division of the Ministry of Education. However, the analysis and evaluation are carried out by external contractors. To date, they have been carried out by the University of Chile.

Factors

The law introduced a mechanism to measure performance together with the introduction of the award. It focuses on performance levels in the following six areas:

- *Effectiveness*: measured by pupils' academic performance;
- *Improvement*: achievement differentials in academic performance of pupils attending the same school;
- *Initiative*: the capacity of the school to incorporate educational innovations and obtain the support of external agents in educational work;
- *Improvement of working conditions* of teachers and satisfactory functioning of the school;
- *Equality of opportunity*: arrangements enabling pupils to have access to the school and to maintain their attendance, in addition to the inclusion of pupils with learning difficulties;
- *Integration and participation* of teachers, parents and guardians in the school's educational programme.

A characteristic feature of SNED is its composite nature. It rates schools' 'performance' in terms not only of their pupils' performance and progress, but also using such important factors for the improvement of educational quality as initiative, teachers' working conditions and participation of the community. It is significant that academic results are not taken as the sole measure of a school's success. Clearly, not all the possible areas of achievement of a school have been taken into account, but at least a more satisfactory way of representing the results of the efforts of the educational community is being sought than simply taking academic performance as the yardstick.

Another noteworthy aspect is that SNED does not consider schools in isolation but in their environment. It is obviously more difficult to obtain good results in situations of deprivation and vulnerability than in favourable social, cultural and economic conditions. This is a significant point, since the measurements made by SIMCE only provide information on academic performance. Of course, SIMCE's results do specify socio-economic levels and status (fee-paying private, subsidized private and subsidized State schools), but only for the purposes of classification. This information is not considered as a factor enabling results to be weighted. For this reason there is no point in comparing one school's performance with another on the basis of SIMCE results, since there is no mechanism for adjusting for the factors that affect their performance.

Forming homogenous groups of schools

An effort has been made in SNED to ensure that schools' performances can be compared. This has involved forming 'homogenous' groups of schools. They are grouped not only by region, as mentioned above, but also on the basis of external factors that might affect their performance. In fact three types of variables are used: (i) geographic variables: rural or urban area; (ii) variables within the system: level of education (primary or secondary); and (iii) social and economic variables (household income, family expenditure on education, educational level of parents and the vulnerability indicator established by the National School Assistance and Grant Board (JUNAEB)). Schools can then be grouped according to the social and economic levels of pupils' families. Four groups are formed on the basis of the first two variables (urban primary schools, rural primary schools, urban secondary schools and rural secondary schools). Socio-economic variables are then applied to form groups by means of cluster analysis. For SNED's 2000-2001 survey, 104 homogenous groups were formed in the country.

Once the schools have been divided into homogenous groups, SNED measures the difference between schools in the same group, with the aim of identifying variations in performance. SIMCE answers the question: 'How is my son or daughter performing?', but does not answer such questions as: 'How is my son's or daughter's class, or school, performing?' (Thomas, 1998). When the focus is on the school's performance, the aim is to identify responsibility for what can be changed in the way the school operates, rather than looking at the differences that are specific to the children and their external circumstances. This focus enables the SNED method to identify the extent of the school's responsibility for pupils' performance levels.

Weighting the factors and indicators

Recognition of the school's responsibility for factors affecting performance that could be altered is not simply a rhetorical feature expressing a position of principle, but is based on statistical measurement. In order to measure school performance, indicators have been constructed for each of the six factors set out above.

TABLE 2. Indicators associated with each factor and their weighting in 2000–2001

Factors	Weighting	Indicators
Effectiveness	37%	Performance ratings in Spanish and mathematics according to SIMCE.
Improvement	28%	Differences in results obtained in Spanish and mathematics according to SIMCE.
Initiative	6%	Regular technical educational activities for groups, optional additional training activities. Formation of a management team meeting once a month. Organization of work in networks. Establishment of pupils' group meeting at least once a month. Monitoring of pupils with learning difficulties as part of general education and/or work activity.
Better working conditions	2%	Classification of the school according to the Ministry of Education's inspection system.
Equality of opportunity	22%	Pupil pass ratio. Pupil retention ratio. Mixed groups in operation. Aim of ensuring that the whole of the school-age population attends school, absence of discriminatory practices, for instance expulsion or cancellation of enrolment of pupils needing to repeat a year or of pregnant pupils, or expulsion

		of pupils during the school year; acceptance of pupils with multiple or severe disabilities.
Involvement of teachers, parents and guardians	5%	Existence of a teachers' council. Establishment of parents' and guardians' groups. Pupil participation by means of a pupils' group. Setting of management and educational goals. Degree of involvement of parents and guardians. Willingness of parents and guardians to assist in the educational process. Parents' views. Teachers' views.

Source: Ministry of Education, February 2000.

Table 2 shows quite clearly that academic achievement indicators are not the only factor taken into account in the evaluation of a school's performance. Different types of indicators, obtained from different sources, are used to provide a fuller and fairer picture. Some are obtained by testing, others from surveys and reports, and regular statistics are standardized to form indicators.

SNED is mainly based on information compiled at the national level. Its sources of information are: (i) SIMCE for academic performance in language and mathematics, and surveys of parents and guardians; (ii) the Ministry of Education for reports of schools inspectors; (iii) the Ministry of Education for enrolment statistics and pass and fail rates. Some indicators, however, require information that is available at the provincial level, and a SNED survey has been devised for this administrative level which is accompanied by a SNED school file, both being managed by the regional provincial directors of education.

SNED is a flexible system. Weighting and the indicators themselves vary over time. There are two main reasons for this: changes are introduced firstly with a view to developing more sophisticated ways of measuring policy orientations and secondly to ensure that the variables involved maintain their differential capacity.

The scores obtained are subsumed in a single numerical value that is known as the SNED rating, which establishes each school's position within each homogenous group, thus establishing a ranking order among them. Schools ranked in the top 25% in each group are then identified and if they come into the top 25% in their region they are designated as outstanding and receive the corresponding financial recompense.

Financial aspects

Between 1990 and 1999, the education budget tripled. SNED is a way of implementing a policy of differentiated remuneration for teachers.

SNED rewarded 1,699 schools for their outstanding performance in 2000-2001. Although this is 33% lower than the total for 1996–97, the schools themselves are now bigger. The number of teachers involved has risen from 30,600 to 32,600 and the average roll has risen from 396.7 to 452.3. This sheds light on the current debate about the ideal size of schools. The amount of the bonus awarded to each teacher has increased by 24% and the budget for the system has increased by 32% in constant terms.

Conclusions

The impact of SNED will be fully evaluated only as of March 2001. Nevertheless, preliminary evaluations of its first two applications have been carried out (1996/97 and 1998/99, Chile, Ministry of Education, 2000), and they already make it possible to identify some of the effects SNED has had.

One concerns knowledge and the acceptance of the system. In evaluation this is central. The evaluations carried out show that in the few years it has been applied, SNED has become known, valued and accepted by school heads and teachers. This is important for two reasons. Firstly, the system seeks to improve school management by rewarding the introduction into the school's everyday life of management methods that are in keeping with educational policy. Thus, as well as rewarding high-quality teaching SNED is also an instrument for improving management by school heads. Secondly, acceptance of SNED implies that an evaluation culture has been strengthened and that this type of evaluation is becoming an instrument for change in the school, since it promotes changes in behaviour. Another aspect to be noted is that the Colegio de Profesores (teaching union) has accepted the system, albeit with some reservations. This is significant, since it represents a departure from the union's traditional stance in the debate as to whether rates of pay should be standardized or diversified. The union's present position is to accept diversification to the extent that evaluation is seen as recognition of professionalization.

From the management point of view, SNED has two main effects. One is to encourage decentralization, as: (i) the attention of SNED is focused on processes and levels of achievement in the individual school; (ii) rewards are allocated to individual schools; (iii) responsibility for performance devolves to the school; and (iv) the school is strengthened. Secondly, the system involves a change in management style from input management to process and performance management.

Notes

1. This text is the exclusive responsibility of its author and does not commit UNESCO.
2. During the 1990s, practically all the countries in Latin America started educational reforms centred on the institutional framework.
3. See Hanushek, Rivkin & Kain (1999); Figlio (1997); Ballou & Podgursky (1999).
4. A more detailed analysis of the military regime's education policy may be found in Espínola & de Moura Castro, 1999.
5. The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for public order, security and social peace, and for the civil administration of the State at regional level. Under the military regime, mayors (and consequently those responsible for municipalized education) and school heads were appointed by the central authority of the Ministry of the Interior, and therefore were accountable to that authority. This changed in 1991. After that date mayors

were elected democratically and school heads were appointed by competitive examination.

6. A 'deconcentrated' system is regarded as having become 'decentralized' when the authorities that govern it—in this case the mayors—are no longer appointed by the central authority but are democratically elected.
7. The USE is a kind of voucher applied at the national level. For an analysis of the efficiency and effectiveness of the system, see McEwan & Carnoy, 2000.
8. These amounts are given in 1996 pesos. Calculations by McEwan & Carnoy, op. cit., US $1 = (approx.) CLP $400 in 1996. Thus, 1 USE is the equivalent of US $20 (1988) and US $30 (1996).

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SCHOOL AUTONOMY AND EVALUATION

SCHOOL AUTONOMY AND ASSESSMENT IN MEXICO

Sylvia Schmelkes

Decentralization and school autonomy

The modern education system in Mexico emerged as a consequence of the revolution (1910–21). The Ministry of Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública) was founded in 1921. Though it began to function in a decentralized mode, it soon realised centralization was necessary to insure provision of educational services, particularly in rural areas (Arnaut, 1998).

The system remained centralized until very recently. In 1992, with the signature of the National Agreement for the Modernization of Basic and Teacher-Training Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1992) by the President of the Republic, the union, and the governors of the states of the federation (Mexico has thirty-one states and one federal district), the administration of basic and normal education was decentralized to the state level. The federal government retained control of curriculum, evaluation and compensatory measures to ensure equity in the provision of educational services among the states.

Mexican basic education experienced a noteworthy expansion during the 1960s and up to the end of the 1980s. It was designed as a vertical system and expanded following this model. Until very recently, the Mexican education system had had no experiences in school autonomy. Schools were conceived as units where uniform instructions emerging from the centre were to be strictly followed. There was, theoretically, little room for decision-making at the school level.

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This situation has changed little with decentralization. The focus of power has perhaps shifted somewhat, from the central to the state level. But the system is still vertical in nature, and schools are supposed to be supervized on how they follow instructions.

In spite of this, progress has been made towards increasing the autonomy of schools experimentally and under close control of project designers. This is a consequence of growing evidence of enormous diversity of schools in Mexico (Rockwell, 1995; Schmelkes, 1999) as well as the importance of schools as institutions and their role in educational improvement.[1]

I personally had the opportunity of directing an intervention project in the state of Coahuila in 1996 aimed at developing the capacity for school planning in 200 preschools and primaries. In 1998, I acted as advisor to the state of Nuevo León for the development of a project aimed at preparing primary school supervisors for fostering and supporting educational planning in the schools under their jurisdiction.

In the federal district, schools are invited to draw up 'school projects' as collective endeavours of the school team, aimed at improving the quality of learning. In 1996, a school management project designed centrally and aimed at improving the capacity of schools for planning their academic activities began in 200 primary schools in four states. The experience has been relatively successful and has grown steadily. To date, 1,697 of the country's primary schools are participating, in nineteen of the thirty-one states (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2000*a*).

One of the most important programmes of the new administration in education[2] is called 'quality schools'. This programme is aimed at urban schools located in marginal areas that volunteer to participate in a school improvement programme. School projects designed by school teams with the participation of the community compete to obtain financial resources aimed at improving and increasing educational infrastructure, equipment, didactic materials and other special educational needs. Participating schools are closely monitored, supported during the process and evaluated at the end of the school year to determine whether the school is eligible to continue within the programme.

The curricular reform for the initial formation of teachers in 1997 includes a course on school management for the first time in history.[3] Also, a nation-wide course is being offered for principals and supervisors dealing with school management and school autonomy.[4]

As can be seen, the system is cautiously moving towards increasing school autonomy. There is no doubt as to where the trend is leading to in the near future. The caution with which Mexico is moving in this direction is due to fear of the actual risks of increasing inequality due to the incapacity of the education system to adequately support schools in their exercise of autonomy.

Assessment: the generation of information and its use[5]

The Mexican Ministry of Education has vast experience in the assessment of learning outcomes. After Chile, which was the first country in Latin America to systematically assess the learning outcomes of its students, Mexico is perhaps the country in Latin America with the most experience in educational assessment, since it has been systematically assessing students since 1970.[6] During these three decades, the expertise of the Mexican evaluators has increased and the quality of both assessment instruments and analysis has improved. During the previous administration, the Directorate for Evaluation within the ministry carried out several important learning assessment studies and participated in a number of international evaluations. There is, therefore, a fair amount of information regarding Mexican students' learning outcomes in basic education.

Paradoxically, however, these efforts have been of little use in informing decision-making at the different levels of educational administration. Educational authorities are either unaware that this information exists, or they do not consider it relevant for their policy-making and activities. Also, these results are not widely published. Society at large receives no information on the state of the education system, despite the General Law of Education that requires the dissemination of evaluation results.[7] There has been a growing public demand for this information to be made public.[8] The new administration has been receptive to these demands and has expressed interest in creating a relatively autonomous National Institute for the Evaluation of Basic Education. This institute would include an area dedicated to the production of indicators regarding progress of education in general, a second area dedicated to the evaluation (and self-evaluation) of educational institutions, and a third area for the assessment of student achievement in basic education. One of the main purposes of this institute would be to make evaluation results available to the general public, thus the desire for its relative autonomy from the Ministry of Education (Rangel Sostmann, 2000).

The future trend, then, also seems to be clear from recent educational developments in the country. More importance will be given to evaluation and assessment; evaluation and assessment results will be made public; presumably, the use of evaluation results for educational decision-making will qualitatively increase.

Innovations in autonomy

I will refer here to two innovations promoting school autonomy: the national school management project, which I briefly described above, and the project I participated in in the state of Coahuila.

The national school management project's objective is to test a strategy for training and fostering teamwork in schools. Teams of teachers, with the principal as leader, are encouraged to diagnose the national educational situation at the primary school level, to identify specific problems that hinder the achievement of goals, to develop a school project aimed at overcoming those problems, and to evaluate the results obtained. A technical group at the state level was trained specifically to support schools in this process. Participation in the project was voluntary. The diagnostic exercise is carried out utilizing school statistics, analysing examination results, revising the students' notebooks, registering the use of time in school, and collecting and analysing the opinion of students and parents. Training of the school team starts with a review of the curriculum and of educational materials provided by the government

One way of developing teamwork, especially favoured by the school management project, is through strengthening the school council, which is composed of the headmaster and all of the teachers in the school. The school council is where school planning ought to take place, where discussions and consensus-building are most likely to occur, and where school personnel acquire the necessary training to carry out the transformations. The project discovered serious limitations of teachers and headmasters in conducting school council meetings. Teachers were not accustomed to following an agenda, to making use of the floor in an orderly manner, and to reaching a consensus. It was determined that training was needed for running a school council. On the other hand, school councils meet only once a month for a period of two and one half hours—obviously not enough time to reach consensus on goals and strategies. The project is aware that more time is required in the daily school routine for teamwork building.

No evaluation of this project has been published, though it is known that information on its progress has been collected systematically. Nevertheless, there are several indications that the project has had an important impact on the education system nationally. Authorities have developed an interest in the school as an institution. They have approached the schools more frequently and with more academic objectives than before. In many states, hindrances to the project (such as a merely regulating or controlling presence of the supervisor, or an excessive administrative load on both principals and teachers) have been gradually modified. In many cases, material needs of schools have been attended to.[9]

One of the most important results is the existence of well-trained consulting teams in all the participating states. These teams are aware of the problems in the day-to-day operation of the schools. They are well versed in the educational purposes of the primary school, as well as in the approach and content of the curriculum and of other materials and projects aimed at improving student learning. They have developed differentiated advising strategies aimed at strengthening work in the classroom, in school management, and in the relationship between the school and the community. The diagnostic exercise has proven to be the main tool for provoking reflection among the school personnel regarding difficulties in teaching, organization, and the relationships with parents, as well as the main causes of these problems. A little over 90% of the schools have designed a school project as a result of an analysis of the school's problems.[10]

Most school principals have become involved in the academic discussion of schoolwork. Most schools have also improved the relationship between school and the parents. Principals in participating schools have spoken well of the project in the regional technical councils and have thus fostered the project's growth.

A strategy has been defined for the generalization of the project to all complete primary schools, excluding those that are benefited by special compensatory programmes, in states that have participated in it for three years.

The following conditions have been identified as impinging on the adequate development of the project:

- The project has discovered many activities that interrupt schoolwork.
- Lack of or insufficient involvement of principals and supervisors. The school project progresses more visibly and solidly when principals and supervisors are involved.
- The administrative load and the number of programmes that distract the supervisors, principals and teachers from their activities.
- The time allotted for collective work within the school is clearly insufficient for the design and monitoring of a school project.
- The rotation of teachers and/or their arrival at the school later than the beginning of the school year hinders the integration of workable and stable teams.
- The lack of co-ordination between the offices and departments that develop projects that are supposed to help schools results in an excessive demand for training, supervision and writing of reports or evaluations.

Thus, this project, as well as the reflections that have accompanied its development, seems to show that more school autonomy is both possible and beneficial in the Mexican education system. It also shows, however, that the structure of the education system requires important transformations to allow for the effectiveness of school autonomy.

The project in Coahuila works mainly with the notion of school planning. The annual plan, the School Project, the concept of school planning itself, are not only old concepts, but they are in continuous use within our school system. The intention of this project was, precisely, to relate it to school change. From this perspective, authors such as Maden and Tomlinson (1991) and MacGilchrist et al. (1995) find in school planning, when it occurs under certain conditions, an effective instrument for improving school quality.

I wish to note three specific characteristics that make this instrument different from traditional planning and that are reflected in the project I am reporting:

- The School Project is an instrument for changing the school. It plans change, not routine (the annual plan, in our schools, plans routine). This is based on a common-sense premise: Quality improvement must recognize that problems exist. If we continue to do the same things, the problems will persist. To solve the problems, we must change what we do.
- The School Project is understood as the product of the collective action of the school community: of the teaching staff, under the leadership of the school principal, and after consultation with and approval of the school's community. This is why the School Project also becomes an instrument for professional development.
- The School Project starts being useful the moment it is designed. The School Project is more than a document for educational authorities; it is a plan to orient daily school activities in a defined direction.

The study that accompanies this intervention project shows that, in spite of our aims, schools that are able to plan their change to achieve improved learning are still the exception. Only about one-third of the schools actually took initial steps towards school change and improvement. The study is rich in information on the obstacles for achieving this aim. These obstacles have to do with the teaching culture, with the way schools function on a day-to-day basis, and the culture and structure of each of the schools in the sample. Other obstacles have to do with the way the larger education system works. The main obstacles encountered include:

- *The culture of simulation.* This seems to be the product of many years of useless work required of teachers and principals. A number of schools work towards improving quality, without defining clear purposes or assessable commitments. Though we have little information up to now about the impact on schools of the School Project, we can say that in this case the School Project has a negative impact.
- *The lack of leadership of school principals.* Many projects are one-person projects, though a number of them are presented as if they were collective. The development of the projects shows that teachers do not comply with the commitments set out at the beginning of the school year. Principals require that project training reaches teachers, and they ask for more frequent visits by the technical group, seemingly to validate their request to the teachers to participate in the development of a school project.
- *Training flaws and gaps.* Even in cases in which a collectively owned project emerges, it is limited by the knowledge and training of both the principal and the teachers. This reduces the diagnoses of the true causes of learning problems, or of solving the problems that are diagnosed. The implications of this finding for the development of educational decentralization to the school level are extremely important because they address the relevant role the state—at either central or state-level—must play to ensure that such a process produces a greater quality of learning.
- The fourth obstacle is related to an important aspect of *the teaching culture*, which makes the teachers tend to seek the causes for learning problems outside the classroom and the schools. It is true that a number of external factors help explain learning difficulties. However, the fact that the factors found in the school and in teacher behaviour are not taken into account may lead to actions that only produce frustration and that will hinder future attempts at school change.
- The fifth obstacle has to do with *the larger education system.* It is a system that operates in a vertical top-down manner and that, in general, appears to be distant from the school. With a few exceptions, the supervisor does not fulfil his/her role adequately and his/her reputation is clearly deteriorated among school staff: Nothing is expected from him/her on the part of teachers and headmasters. Many schools are in such physical deterioration, or with such an evident lack of infrastructure—mainly explained by national economic conditions that give preference to salaries over infrastructure—that the temptation of dedicating the School Project to solve these problems is enormous. The request for greater counselling and training, as well as for more frequent vis-

its on the part of the technical group, are indications of an education system that operates bureaucratically without regard to the school's needs. It is difficult to understand greater autonomy to the schools while this manner of operating of the education system remains.

In spite of all these difficulties, we can end this section on an optimistic note. In one-third of the primary schools in the sample one can observe some trends towards important change or transformation. Three of these are particularly relevant:

- Schools begin to think in terms of students learning. School projects in general are related to problems directly linked to learning. The central activity of the school appears to be revolving around the education of the students.
- Teachers work collectively and discover the value of teamwork and the value of other teachers. In one-third of the schools mentioned frequent meetings of the School Technical Council are held during which academic issues are discussed because the School Project is part of the agenda and is monitored in these meetings. More important, however, are indications that the discovery of the value of teamwork seems to be irreversible. A similar trend was observed in the few school districts in which periodic meetings of the District Technical Council were held. Here the headmasters discovered the value of the interchange of experiences, the role of other principals as counsellors of each other's projects, and the importance of dealing with academic issues. In these cases, the supervisor transformed his role and was re-valued by principals.
- School approaches the community. This is perhaps the most visible change as a consequence of the project. Since schools are recommended to consult parents on the School Project, after which some schools ask for specific commitments on their part, both principal and teacher discover that parents may become very important allies in the child's education. Myths in Mexican school culture relative to parents—that they are apathetic, uninterested, uneducated—are destroyed. The school becomes nearer to the community and takes it more into account. This is another process that might be irreversible. There are two ways in which the relationship between the school and the community has changed. One refers to the possibility of discussing problems that underlie existing conflicts between the school and the community or the parents. An example is a school that had no fence, exposing the children to the risk of accidents in the street. Working together, the school and community found the resources to build the fence, and the parents provided the labour to build it. This changed the relationships between school and community that led to other collaborative projects. Another way is the participation of parents in the fostering of their children's progress in school. In several schools, teachers were able to state clearly what they expected from the parents: less unjustified absenteeism, the reservation of a special time and space for doing homework, and the provision of an adequate, nutritious meal before school for the children. The parents became more aware of what was happening in school and of their own responsibility towards their children's progress.

The changes noted above only occur in one-third of the schools in the sample.

Nevertheless, the fact that they are present seems to demonstrate that change that stems from the school is possible. On the other hand, they indicate that the transformation we are after is a slow process that must begin with building the scaffolding that will permit an improvement of the quality of the school in the future. This, however, must occur at the same time the system is transformed. A small indication of this change was seen in two of the school districts we worked in, though this is not analysed in this paper. The idea is for the system to position the individual school at the centre of its activities and for it to function around its needs and weaknesses, as well as its strengths.

Innovations in assessment[11]

During the previous administration (1994–2000), an important evaluation of student achievement with respect to national standards for primary education in reading and mathematics was carried out.[12] Criterion-referenced tests were developed for the six grades of primary education in both areas, and were applied to a nationally representative sample of different types of schools: urban private schools, urban public schools, rural public schools,[13] Cursos Comunitarios,[14] and Indian bilingual-bicultural schools.

In the following, I refer to main conclusions from the results of the application carried out in May 1998.

Most Mexican students meet national standards or are near meeting them. Nevertheless, about one-third of the students are far from meeting national standards, and these grow from the fourth grade onwards.

However, schools are heterogeneous regarding the achievement of national standards in both reading and mathematics. With few exceptions, there are significant differences in students' scores among the different types of schools, which reflects the weight of socio-economic and cultural factors on student achievement.

The exceptions to the previous conclusion, however, are interesting: differences in reading tend to disappear after the third grade between rural schools and Cursos Comunitarios, and in mathematics, between Cursos Comunitarios and both rural and urban public schools.

There are also important differences in the proportion of students achieving standards among the different types of schools. Differences between private and public urban schools tend to grow as one progresses in the school grades. The opposite occurs with the differences between urban and rural public schools, which tend to become smaller as one progresses in the school grades.

An analysis by quartiles and deciles, however, demonstrates the existence of strong differences between schools of the same type. The analysis of deciles also shows that there are good schools in all populations, from private urban schools to indigenous schools,[15] and that a good school is just as good in one population as in another. In several cases, good indigenous schools have a greater proportion of students achieving standards than good private schools. This, of course, is a very important result, because it demonstrates that excellent schools in any of the circumstances and populations studied exist and, therefore, more can be developed.

This evaluation based on national standards for primary schools in reading and mathematics is considered an innovation for two reasons. The first concerns how the tests were constructed: it is possible not only to give an idea of the degree of development of basic skills among the primary school students, but also of being able to say something about what the students know and what they lack in order to meet the standards. For example, in the case of reading, it is clear that in general students are able to read sentences and paragraphs, but those that do not meet the standards cannot integrate the meaning of a complete text (three or more paragraphs, depending on the grade). The second reason concerns the type of analysis performed: one of the main objectives is the measurement of inequality in students' learning results between different types of schools. Also, the identification of exceptional schools and of schools presenting severe problems is possible. This evaluation was accompanied by contextual information on the child, the family and the school, which has not yet been analysed, but which will allow for the hypothetical identification of conditions in which the probabilities of having a well-performing school, or of having a poorly performing school, become stronger. The relevance of this type of analysis for policy making at the different levels is evident.

Towards a fruitful relationship[16]

The quality of primary education, as measured by student achievement, is unequally distributed among different types of schools in Mexico. In general, the poorer the context and the students and their families, and/or the more the children belong to families from cultural (ethnic and linguistic) minorities, the lower the achievement of the students and the proportion of students achieving national standards.

This occurs within a system that functions vertically and that expects schools to follow instructions, not to make decisions. However, the evaluation that we have described clearly identifies schools in all categories with excellent learning outcomes among their students. Excellent schools in the different categories have statistically equivalent learning outcomes. It is clear that these schools are the exception and not the rule. Nevertheless, it is also obvious that these schools are making their own decisions, and probably they are taking them collectively. Only this can explain their extraordinary results.

Thus, decision-making within the school—or a certain and perhaps increasing degree of school autonomy—is undoubtedly advisable.

Nevertheless, in a system in which inequalities in learning outcomes are as severe as we have described, autonomy on its own could become a further cause of inequality. The capacity of schools for diagnosing their problems, setting collective objectives, obtaining clear commitments from the different members of the community, and monitoring and evaluating their progress is, as we have seen in the second section of this article, also unequally distributed.

It would, therefore, be a mistake to conclude that the system may be weakened because schools can be made accountable for their results, as has occurred in

England, where local educational authorities were practically done away with and the system favoured inspection and evaluation in place of local support. On the contrary, the education system has to become stronger. Aided with results of evaluation studies such as the one we have mentioned, the system has to be able to support schools according to their capacity to make the right decisions. The education system should, therefore, use the results of student and school evaluations to identify both individual schools and contextual and school conditions that indicate situations in need of special pedagogical and managerial support. Interaction between schools that have been identified as well performing, and those that have difficulties in achieving educational standards, could perhaps become one of the strategies of support.

A fruitful relationship among non-punitive assessment, the fostering of school autonomy, the differential support to the schools that need it the most on the part of the education system, and the requirement of accountability on the part of the school, would thus seem the most sensible course for an education system characterized by inequality such as the Mexican case that we have described here. This, of course, requires qualitative leaps on the part of both the schools and the education system. Schools must put the student, and his/her learning, at the centre of their pursuit. The system must place each school, according to its conditions, problems and potential, at the centre of its activity.

Notes

1. I refer to the well-known and growing body of literature on school effectiveness and school improvement.
2. The present administration took office 1 December 2000. For the first time in seventy-one years, elections were won by an opposition party. Cf. Rangel Sostmann, 2000.
3. Secretaría de Educación Pública. 1997. The course is also offered in the programme for the initial training of pre-school and lower secondary schoolteachers.
4. Secretaría de Educación Pública. 2000*b*. The course is also offered for secondary school principals and supervisors.
5. Part of this section is based on Schmelkes, 2001.
6. There is a programme for the promotion of teachers that includes an evaluation of their students. As part of this programme, around 7 million students are tested yearly in primary and secondary schools. There is an on-going longitudinal study for the evaluation of primary schools that has collected data in the same schools for five years. A diagnostic evaluation of students entering secondary schools (an aptitude test) has been carried out for ten years in certain cities within the country. A national evaluation based on both primary school standards for reading and mathematics has been carried out with a nationally representative sample of schools for three consecutive years, and for the first time in secondary schools. Mexico has participated in the following international studies: The TIMSS and the TIMSS-R, the international assessment of third-grade students co-ordinated by the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Office of UNESCO (Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad) and, more recently, the PISA project of OECD.
7. Article 31 of the General Law of Education states: ‘Educational authorities will inform

teachers, students, parents, and society at large, of the results of evaluations and of other information that allows for the measurement of the development and progress of education in each state'. Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1993.

8. Cf., for example, Observatorio Ciudadano de la Educación, 1999. Also in: www.observatorio.org.
9. In Mexico, textbooks for primary school students are free. There are also books for the teacher, cards for the development of mathematical competences, and a classroom library. It has been found that in many cases these materials are not used, or not sufficiently exploited.
10. The project excludes schools that have more than one class per teacher. Many schools are 'multigrade'. It is not easy to have a reliable statistic of these schools, but 25% of all primary schools had only one teacher in 1998/99. Ezpeleta & Weiss, 2000.
11. What follows is based on Schmelkes, Forthcoming.
12. During the last year of the administration, the same exercise was carried out for lower secondary education also. However, in this article I refer only to results at the primary education level.
13. There are practically no private rural schools in Mexico. Private primary schools represent 5% of the total number of schools in the country, and give service to approximately 10% of the primary school students.
14. Cursos Comunitarios is a form of supplying primary education to very small rural communities (under thirty school-age children). There is one 'para-teacher' (secondary school graduate) for the three levels (instead of six grades) of primary education.
15. Indigenous schools offer bilingual education to primary school children of the sixty-two different ethnic and linguistic groups in the country.
16. What follows is based on Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1999.

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TRENDS/CASES

MODERN EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

Saif R. Samady

Historical antecedent

Learning and civilization have flourished during many eras of Afghan history. A cradle and crossroads of ancient civilizations, Afghanistan has contributed to enriching the culture of the region in which it is located throughout its history. During the Islamic period, many centres of learning were established in cities such as Balkh, Herat and Ghazni, which produced scholars in philosophy, literature and science to serve the people of the region and beyond. The tenth-century medical treaties written by Ibn-i-Seena Balkhi were used in universities until the end of nineteenth century. Many Afghan poets and philosophers have enriched human thought and civilization. These include the tenth-century Abu Rayhan Biruni, eleventh-century Hakim Sanai, thirteenth-century Khwaja Abdullah Ansari and Maulana Jalaludin Roumi, and the seventeenth-century Kushal Khan Khattak and Rahman Baba. The nineteenth-century Afghan political philosopher Jamaludin Afghani, who had many disciples, travelled through Asia, Africa and Europe to promote national independence and Islamic solidarity and to explain the relation between Islam, science and progress.

Original language: English

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At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Islamic tradition permeated every aspect of Afghan society, including education and training at all levels. Education was provided at home, in the mosques, in informal schools linked to mosques, in religious centres (Madrasa) and in circles of scholars. These institutions were supported by parents, local communities, religious and tribal leaders and through private resources. The Madrasa provided general knowledge and theological studies for young men and prepared religious and community guides and teachers. Some opportunities for studies in areas such as writing, poetry and literature, history, science and traditional medicine were available through private tutoring and in small informal circles. Mosques and related schools served as basic community centres in which pupils could study the *Koran*, learn about Islamic values and ethics, and acquire literacy and numeracy. Traditional education also helped prepare young people (mainly boys) for work through informal apprenticeships in local arts and crafts, farming and commerce.

Educational developments during the twentieth century reflected the religious and traditional character of Afghan society. Afghanistan's changing political context, including the social and economic policies of the successive regimes and the public's aspiration for the education of their children, influenced the nature and form of education and its expansion. In light of the multi-ethnic composition of Afghan society, cultural and linguistic policies were important factors in the development of education. Textbooks and educational materials were prepared in two national languages (Pashto and Dari).

A number of factors have hindered educational development in Afghanistan. The country is landlocked. Its economy is agricultural (85% of the population live in rural areas) and its resources unexploited. Economic constraints have proven to be the major obstacles to its educational development. Its GDP per capita was at US$60 in 1960, US$160 in 1976, and estimated at about US$600 in 1995. Its domestic product increased from 12.5 billion Afs. in 1953 to 90.0 billion Afs. in 1976.[1] In the 1960s, the United Nations classified Afghanistan as one of the world's twenty-five least developed countries.

In the second half of the last century, the international organizations played an important role in stimulating educational developments worldwide by setting norms and targets and by providing technical and financial assistance. This international co-operation contributed to the expansion and qualitative improvement of modern education in Afghanistan.

Pre-Second World War developments

The beginning of modern education in Afghanistan corresponds with the 1903 establishment of the first secondary school, Habibia, in Kabul. Afghan and foreign teachers were recruited for Habibia, the aim of which was to train personnel for the civil service. Soon after, several modern primary schools and a teacher training institution were established. In 1909, the government set up a Board of Education to supervise education across the country, including traditional educational institutions. The board's duties included that of approving school curriculum and textbooks. Following Afghanistan's independence from the United Kingdom in 1919, King Ammanullah's government made educational development a high priority and the first minister of education was appointed in 1922. During the 1920s, a number of primary and secondary schools—including a school for girls and an adult education centre for women—were established in Kabul, along with several vocational schools in areas such as agriculture, arts and crafts and public administration. For the first time, Afghan boys and girls were sent abroad for studies. The establishment of diplomatic and cultural relations with foreign countries contributed to the development of a modern education system. Through bilateral co-operation with countries such as Turkey, France and Germany, foreign teachers and expertise as well as student scholarships were made available to Afghans.

Educational development experienced a set-back in 1929 when modern schools were closed during the nine months of civil strife and anarchy that followed the January abdication of King Ammanullah. When, following upon this period of conflict, Nadir Shah became king of Afghanistan, the country's thirteen primary and secondary schools were reopened and attention was again given to the development of education. A new constitution, adopted in 1931, made primary schooling compulsory for Afghans and placed all modern educational institutions under the control of the State. (Traditional educational entities remained independent.) Education at all levels—primary through tertiary—was provided free for Afghans. In 1933, Nadir Shah was assassinated and his son Zaher Shah came to the throne.

The Afghan education system saw some expansion during the 1930s. Special attention was given to the development of Pashto as one of the two main national languages of Afghanistan. A number of secondary schools were established in the provinces and several traditional religious schools were modernized and incorporated into the formal educational structure. A secondary school for girls was established in Kabul, along with two secondary vocational schools—one mechanical, the other agricultural—and a school for the training of assistant doctors and pharmacists. Turkish medical advisers and several Afghan doctors, who had trained abroad, aided in the creation in 1932 of the Faculty of Medicine—which was later to evolve into the University of Kabul, officially established in 1946. The Faculty of Medicine graduated the first group of eight intern doctors and twelve pharmacists in 1937. With a view to the social and economic development of Afghanistan, in 1938 the government sent a group of secondary school graduates to universities in France, Germany and the United States.

The pace of educational development in Afghanistan slowed down considerably during the Second World War—during which Afghanistan remained neutral—because of a variety of economic and technical constraints: most foreign experts and teachers left the country, and equipment and materials needed for educational institutions could not be imported. Nonetheless, by the end of the Second World War, the Afghan education system had expanded. During the twenty-year period beginning in 1930, the number of students had risen from 1,590 to 95,300, 4,350 of whom were girls. The number of teachers had increased from fifty-three in 1930 to some 3,000 in 1950; they served 368 schools, including 308 primary schools, twenty-five lower secondary schools (middle schools), sixteen upper secondary schools (lycees), four vocational schools, one teacher training school and seven formal religious schools. There were also 456 students, of which forty were female, in five institutions of higher education. By the middle of the twentieth-century, 6% of Afghan children, ages 6-12, were enrolled in primary schools, out of an estimated population of 11 million people.

Post-Second World War developments

After 1945, in the context of political reform, the beginnings of a short-lived democratic movement and the return of a number of Afghan specialists from abroad, several important measures were taken to encourage educational development in Afghanistan. In 1947, the Ministry of Education was reorganized to ensure the further development of primary, secondary, technical and vocational and teacher education. At this time, more focus was also placed on the improvement and production of textbooks, provision of teaching equipment and materials and school construction (all of which fell within the ministry's portfolio). To promote the expansion of education, increased authority and resources were delegated away from the central office and toward provincial offices throughout the country.

From the early 1950s, the Afghan Government focused on the systematic expansion of education and the improvement of educational quality. It launched a number of development plans, financed through both internal resources as well as bilateral and multilateral technical assistance funds and loans from the international community—including the United Nations and countries such as the United States, the former USSR and Germany. In the first of three five-year development plans (for the period 1956–61), 6.5% of the national budget was devoted to social services, with 958 million Afs. earmarked for education. This plan focused principally on primary schooling.

In view of the country's need for a trained workforce, the second five-year plan (for the period 1962–67) emphasized secondary, technical and higher education. In this plan, the share of the national budget for social services was increased to 11.2%, with 1,759 million Afs. earmarked for education. The third five-year plan (for the period 1968–73) paid special attention to qualitative improvements in teacher education and reflected a commitment to the balanced expansion of education at all levels. This time, 16.7% of the total nation budget was allocated to social services, with over 3,000 million (or 3 billion) Afs. targeted for education. While primary education expanded as a result of these development plans, it was secondary education that experienced the fastest growth—as a result of public demand, especially in the provinces.

Following a coup d'état in 1973, after which Afghanistan was proclaimed a republic and Mohammad Daoud (a former prime minister and cousin of King Zaher) became head of state, Afghanistan launched a seven-year economic and social development plan (for the period 1976–83). Its aim was to accelerate economic growth

SCHOOL AUTONOMY AND EVALUATION

SCHOOL AUTONOMY AND ASSESSMENT IN MEXICO

Sylvia Schmelkes

Decentralization and school autonomy

The modern education system in Mexico emerged as a consequence of the revolution (1910–21). The Ministry of Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública) was founded in 1921. Though it began to function in a decentralized mode, it soon realised centralization was necessary to insure provision of educational services, particularly in rural areas (Arnaut, 1998).

The system remained centralized until very recently. In 1992, with the signature of the National Agreement for the Modernization of Basic and Teacher-Training Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1992) by the President of the Republic, the union, and the governors of the states of the federation (Mexico has thirty-one states and one federal district), the administration of basic and normal education was decentralized to the state level. The federal government retained control of curriculum, evaluation and compensatory measures to ensure equity in the provision of educational services among the states.

Mexican basic education experienced a noteworthy expansion during the 1960s and up to the end of the 1980s. It was designed as a vertical system and expanded following this model. Until very recently, the Mexican education system had had no experiences in school autonomy. Schools were conceived as units where uniform instructions emerging from the centre were to be strictly followed. There was, theoretically, little room for decision-making at the school level.

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This situation has changed little with decentralization. The focus of power has perhaps shifted somewhat, from the central to the state level. But the system is still vertical in nature, and schools are supposed to be supervized on how they follow instructions.

In spite of this, progress has been made towards increasing the autonomy of schools experimentally and under close control of project designers. This is a consequence of growing evidence of enormous diversity of schools in Mexico (Rockwell, 1995; Schmelkes, 1999) as well as the importance of schools as institutions and their role in educational improvement.[1]

I personally had the opportunity of directing an intervention project in the state of Coahuila in 1996 aimed at developing the capacity for school planning in 200 preschools and primaries. In 1998, I acted as advisor to the state of Nuevo León for the development of a project aimed at preparing primary school supervisors for fostering and supporting educational planning in the schools under their jurisdiction.

In the federal district, schools are invited to draw up 'school projects' as collective endeavours of the school team, aimed at improving the quality of learning. In 1996, a school management project designed centrally and aimed at improving the capacity of schools for planning their academic activities began in 200 primary schools in four states. The experience has been relatively successful and has grown steadily. To date, 1,697 of the country's primary schools are participating, in nineteen of the thirty-one states (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2000*a*).

One of the most important programmes of the new administration in education[2] is called 'quality schools'. This programme is aimed at urban schools located in marginal areas that volunteer to participate in a school improvement programme. School projects designed by school teams with the participation of the community compete to obtain financial resources aimed at improving and increasing educational infrastructure, equipment, didactic materials and other special educational needs. Participating schools are closely monitored, supported during the process and evaluated at the end of the school year to determine whether the school is eligible to continue within the programme.

The curricular reform for the initial formation of teachers in 1997 includes a course on school management for the first time in history.[3] Also, a nation-wide course is being offered for principals and supervisors dealing with school management and school autonomy.[4]

As can be seen, the system is cautiously moving towards increasing school autonomy. There is no doubt as to where the trend is leading to in the near future. The caution with which Mexico is moving in this direction is due to fear of the actual risks of increasing inequality due to the incapacity of the education system to adequately support schools in their exercise of autonomy.

Assessment: the generation of information and its use[5]

The Mexican Ministry of Education has vast experience in the assessment of learning outcomes. After Chile, which was the first country in Latin America to systematically assess the learning outcomes of its students, Mexico is perhaps the country in Latin America with the most experience in educational assessment, since it has been systematically assessing students since 1970.[6] During these three decades, the expertise of the Mexican evaluators has increased and the quality of both assessment instruments and analysis has improved. During the previous administration, the Directorate for Evaluation within the ministry carried out several important learning assessment studies and participated in a number of international evaluations. There is, therefore, a fair amount of information regarding Mexican students' learning outcomes in basic education.

Paradoxically, however, these efforts have been of little use in informing decision-making at the different levels of educational administration. Educational authorities are either unaware that this information exists, or they do not consider it relevant for their policy-making and activities. Also, these results are not widely published. Society at large receives no information on the state of the education system, despite the General Law of Education that requires the dissemination of evaluation results.[7] There has been a growing public demand for this information to be made public.[8] The new administration has been receptive to these demands and has expressed interest in creating a relatively autonomous National Institute for the Evaluation of Basic Education. This institute would include an area dedicated to the production of indicators regarding progress of education in general, a second area dedicated to the evaluation (and self-evaluation) of educational institutions, and a third area for the assessment of student achievement in basic education. One of the main purposes of this institute would be to make evaluation results available to the general public, thus the desire for its relative autonomy from the Ministry of Education (Rangel Sostmann, 2000).

The future trend, then, also seems to be clear from recent educational developments in the country. More importance will be given to evaluation and assessment; evaluation and assessment results will be made public; presumably, the use of evaluation results for educational decision-making will qualitatively increase.

Innovations in autonomy

I will refer here to two innovations promoting school autonomy: the national school management project, which I briefly described above, and the project I participated in in the state of Coahuila.

The national school management project's objective is to test a strategy for training and fostering teamwork in schools. Teams of teachers, with the principal as leader, are encouraged to diagnose the national educational situation at the primary school level, to identify specific problems that hinder the achievement of goals, to develop a school project aimed at overcoming those problems, and to evaluate the results obtained. A technical group at the state level was trained specifically to support schools in this process. Participation in the project was voluntary. The diagnostic exercise is carried out utilizing school statistics, analysing examination results, revising the students' notebooks, registering the use of time in school, and collecting and analysing the opinion of students and parents. Training of the school team starts with a review of the curriculum and of educational materials provided by the government

One way of developing teamwork, especially favoured by the school management project, is through strengthening the school council, which is composed of the headmaster and all of the teachers in the school. The school council is where school planning ought to take place, where discussions and consensus-building are most likely to occur, and where school personnel acquire the necessary training to carry out the transformations. The project discovered serious limitations of teachers and headmasters in conducting school council meetings. Teachers were not accustomed to following an agenda, to making use of the floor in an orderly manner, and to reaching a consensus. It was determined that training was needed for running a school council. On the other hand, school councils meet only once a month for a period of two and one half hours—obviously not enough time to reach consensus on goals and strategies. The project is aware that more time is required in the daily school routine for teamwork building.

No evaluation of this project has been published, though it is known that information on its progress has been collected systematically. Nevertheless, there are several indications that the project has had an important impact on the education system nationally. Authorities have developed an interest in the school as an institution. They have approached the schools more frequently and with more academic objectives than before. In many states, hindrances to the project (such as a merely regulating or controlling presence of the supervisor, or an excessive administrative load on both principals and teachers) have been gradually modified. In many cases, material needs of schools have been attended to.[9]

One of the most important results is the existence of well-trained consulting teams in all the participating states. These teams are aware of the problems in the day-to-day operation of the schools. They are well versed in the educational purposes of the primary school, as well as in the approach and content of the curriculum and of other materials and projects aimed at improving student learning. They have developed differentiated advising strategies aimed at strengthening work in the classroom, in school management, and in the relationship between the school and the community. The diagnostic exercise has proven to be the main tool for provoking reflection among the school personnel regarding difficulties in teaching, organization, and the relationships with parents, as well as the main causes of these problems. A little over 90% of the schools have designed a school project as a result of an analysis of the school's problems.[10]

Most school principals have become involved in the academic discussion of schoolwork. Most schools have also improved the relationship between school and the parents. Principals in participating schools have spoken well of the project in the regional technical councils and have thus fostered the project's growth.

A strategy has been defined for the generalization of the project to all complete primary schools, excluding those that are benefited by special compensatory programmes, in states that have participated in it for three years.

The following conditions have been identified as impinging on the adequate development of the project:

- The project has discovered many activities that interrupt schoolwork.
- Lack of or insufficient involvement of principals and supervisors. The school project progresses more visibly and solidly when principals and supervisors are involved.
- The administrative load and the number of programmes that distract the supervisors, principals and teachers from their activities.
- The time allotted for collective work within the school is clearly insufficient for the design and monitoring of a school project.
- The rotation of teachers and/or their arrival at the school later than the beginning of the school year hinders the integration of workable and stable teams.
- The lack of co-ordination between the offices and departments that develop projects that are supposed to help schools results in an excessive demand for training, supervision and writing of reports or evaluations.

Thus, this project, as well as the reflections that have accompanied its development, seems to show that more school autonomy is both possible and beneficial in the Mexican education system. It also shows, however, that the structure of the education system requires important transformations to allow for the effectiveness of school autonomy.

The project in Coahuila works mainly with the notion of school planning. The annual plan, the School Project, the concept of school planning itself, are not only old concepts, but they are in continuous use within our school system. The intention of this project was, precisely, to relate it to school change. From this perspective, authors such as Maden and Tomlinson (1991) and MacGilchrist et al. (1995) find in school planning, when it occurs under certain conditions, an effective instrument for improving school quality.

I wish to note three specific characteristics that make this instrument different from traditional planning and that are reflected in the project I am reporting:

- The School Project is an instrument for changing the school. It plans change, not routine (the annual plan, in our schools, plans routine). This is based on a common-sense premise: Quality improvement must recognize that problems exist. If we continue to do the same things, the problems will persist. To solve the problems, we must change what we do.
- The School Project is understood as the product of the collective action of the school community: of the teaching staff, under the leadership of the school principal, and after consultation with and approval of the school's community. This is why the School Project also becomes an instrument for professional development.
- The School Project starts being useful the moment it is designed. The School Project is more than a document for educational authorities; it is a plan to orient daily school activities in a defined direction.

The study that accompanies this intervention project shows that, in spite of our aims, schools that are able to plan their change to achieve improved learning are still the exception. Only about one-third of the schools actually took initial steps towards school change and improvement. The study is rich in information on the obstacles for achieving this aim. These obstacles have to do with the teaching culture, with the way schools function on a day-to-day basis, and the culture and structure of each of the schools in the sample. Other obstacles have to do with the way the larger education system works. The main obstacles encountered include:

- *The culture of simulation*. This seems to be the product of many years of useless work required of teachers and principals. A number of schools work towards improving quality, without defining clear purposes or assessable commitments. Though we have little information up to now about the impact on schools of the School Project, we can say that in this case the School Project has a negative impact.
- *The lack of leadership of school principals*. Many projects are one-person projects, though a number of them are presented as if they were collective. The development of the projects shows that teachers do not comply with the commitments set out at the beginning of the school year. Principals require that project training reaches teachers, and they ask for more frequent visits by the technical group, seemingly to validate their request to the teachers to participate in the development of a school project.
- *Training flaws and gaps*. Even in cases in which a collectively owned project emerges, it is limited by the knowledge and training of both the principal and the teachers. This reduces the diagnoses of the true causes of learning problems, or of solving the problems that are diagnosed. The implications of this finding for the development of educational decentralization to the school level are extremely important because they address the relevant role the state—at either central or state-level—must play to ensure that such a process produces a greater quality of learning.
- The fourth obstacle is related to an important aspect of *the teaching culture*, which makes the teachers tend to seek the causes for learning problems outside the classroom and the schools. It is true that a number of external factors help explain learning difficulties. However, the fact that the factors found in the school and in teacher behaviour are not taken into account may lead to actions that only produce frustration and that will hinder future attempts at school change.
- The fifth obstacle has to do with *the larger education system*. It is a system that operates in a vertical top-down manner and that, in general, appears to be distant from the school. With a few exceptions, the supervisor does not fulfil his/her role adequately and his/her reputation is clearly deteriorated among school staff: Nothing is expected from him/her on the part of teachers and headmasters. Many schools are in such physical deterioration, or with such an evident lack of infrastructure—mainly explained by national economic conditions that give preference to salaries over infrastructure—that the temptation of dedicating the School Project to solve these problems is enormous. The request for greater counselling and training, as well as for more frequent vis-

its on the part of the technical group, are indications of an education system that operates bureaucratically without regard to the school's needs. It is difficult to understand greater autonomy to the schools while this manner of operating of the education system remains.

In spite of all these difficulties, we can end this section on an optimistic note. In one-third of the primary schools in the sample one can observe some trends towards important change or transformation. Three of these are particularly relevant:

- Schools begin to think in terms of students learning. School projects in general are related to problems directly linked to learning. The central activity of the school appears to be revolving around the education of the students.
- Teachers work collectively and discover the value of teamwork and the value of other teachers. In one-third of the schools mentioned frequent meetings of the School Technical Council are held during which academic issues are discussed because the School Project is part of the agenda and is monitored in these meetings. More important, however, are indications that the discovery of the value of teamwork seems to be irreversible. A similar trend was observed in the few school districts in which periodic meetings of the District Technical Council were held. Here the headmasters discovered the value of the interchange of experiences, the role of other principals as counsellors of each other's projects, and the importance of dealing with academic issues. In these cases, the supervisor transformed his role and was re-valued by principals.
- School approaches the community. This is perhaps the most visible change as a consequence of the project. Since schools are recommended to consult parents on the School Project, after which some schools ask for specific commitments on their part, both principal and teacher discover that parents may become very important allies in the child's education. Myths in Mexican school culture relative to parents—that they are apathetic, uninterested, uneducated—are destroyed. The school becomes nearer to the community and takes it more into account. This is another process that might be irreversible. There are two ways in which the relationship between the school and the community has changed. One refers to the possibility of discussing problems that underlie existing conflicts between the school and the community or the parents. An example is a school that had no fence, exposing the children to the risk of accidents in the street. Working together, the school and community found the resources to build the fence, and the parents provided the labour to build it. This changed the relationships between school and community that led to other collaborative projects. Another way is the participation of parents in the fostering of their children's progress in school. In several schools, teachers were able to state clearly what they expected from the parents: less unjustified absenteeism, the reservation of a special time and space for doing homework, and the provision of an adequate, nutritious meal before school for the children. The parents became more aware of what was happening in school and of their own responsibility towards their children's progress.

The changes noted above only occur in one-third of the schools in the sample.

Nevertheless, the fact that they are present seems to demonstrate that change that stems from the school is possible. On the other hand, they indicate that the transformation we are after is a slow process that must begin with building the scaffolding that will permit an improvement of the quality of the school in the future. This, however, must occur at the same time the system is transformed. A small indication of this change was seen in two of the school districts we worked in, though this is not analysed in this paper. The idea is for the system to position the individual school at the centre of its activities and for it to function around its needs and weaknesses, as well as its strengths.

Innovations in assessment[11]

During the previous administration (1994–2000), an important evaluation of student achievement with respect to national standards for primary education in reading and mathematics was carried out.[12] Criterion-referenced tests were developed for the six grades of primary education in both areas, and were applied to a nationally representative sample of different types of schools: urban private schools, urban public schools, rural public schools,[13] Cursos Comunitarios,[14] and Indian bilingual-bicultural schools.

In the following, I refer to main conclusions from the results of the application carried out in May 1998.

Most Mexican students meet national standards or are near meeting them. Nevertheless, about one-third of the students are far from meeting national standards, and these grow from the fourth grade onwards.

However, schools are heterogeneous regarding the achievement of national standards in both reading and mathematics. With few exceptions, there are significant differences in students' scores among the different types of schools, which reflects the weight of socio-economic and cultural factors on student achievement.

The exceptions to the previous conclusion, however, are interesting: differences in reading tend to disappear after the third grade between rural schools and Cursos Comunitarios, and in mathematics, between Cursos Comunitarios and both rural and urban public schools.

There are also important differences in the proportion of students achieving standards among the different types of schools. Differences between private and public urban schools tend to grow as one progresses in the school grades. The opposite occurs with the differences between urban and rural public schools, which tend to become smaller as one progresses in the school grades.

An analysis by quartiles and deciles, however, demonstrates the existence of strong differences between schools of the same type. The analysis of deciles also shows that there are good schools in all populations, from private urban schools to indigenous schools,[15] and that a good school is just as good in one population as in another. In several cases, good indigenous schools have a greater proportion of students achieving standards than good private schools. This, of course, is a very important result, because it demonstrates that excellent schools in any of the circumstances and populations studied exist and, therefore, more can be developed.

This evaluation based on national standards for primary schools in reading and mathematics is considered an innovation for two reasons. The first concerns how the tests were constructed: it is possible not only to give an idea of the degree of development of basic skills among the primary school students, but also of being able to say something about what the students know and what they lack in order to meet the standards. For example, in the case of reading, it is clear that in general students are able to read sentences and paragraphs, but those that do not meet the standards cannot integrate the meaning of a complete text (three or more paragraphs, depending on the grade). The second reason concerns the type of analysis performed: one of the main objectives is the measurement of inequality in students' learning results between different types of schools. Also, the identification of exceptional schools and of schools presenting severe problems is possible. This evaluation was accompanied by contextual information on the child, the family and the school, which has not yet been analysed, but which will allow for the hypothetical identification of conditions in which the probabilities of having a well-performing school, or of having a poorly performing school, become stronger. The relevance of this type of analysis for policy making at the different levels is evident.

Towards a fruitful relationship[16]

The quality of primary education, as measured by student achievement, is unequally distributed among different types of schools in Mexico. In general, the poorer the context and the students and their families, and/or the more the children belong to families from cultural (ethnic and linguistic) minorities, the lower the achievement of the students and the proportion of students achieving national standards.

This occurs within a system that functions vertically and that expects schools to follow instructions, not to make decisions. However, the evaluation that we have described clearly identifies schools in all categories with excellent learning outcomes among their students. Excellent schools in the different categories have statistically equivalent learning outcomes. It is clear that these schools are the exception and not the rule. Nevertheless, it is also obvious that these schools are making their own decisions, and probably they are taking them collectively. Only this can explain their extraordinary results.

Thus, decision-making within the school—or a certain and perhaps increasing degree of school autonomy—is undoubtedly advisable.

Nevertheless, in a system in which inequalities in learning outcomes are as severe as we have described, autonomy on its own could become a further cause of inequality. The capacity of schools for diagnosing their problems, setting collective objectives, obtaining clear commitments from the different members of the community, and monitoring and evaluating their progress is, as we have seen in the second section of this article, also unequally distributed.

It would, therefore, be a mistake to conclude that the system may be weakened because schools can be made accountable for their results, as has occurred in

England, where local educational authorities were practically done away with and the system favoured inspection and evaluation in place of local support. On the contrary, the education system has to become stronger. Aided with results of evaluation studies such as the one we have mentioned, the system has to be able to support schools according to their capacity to make the right decisions. The education system should, therefore, use the results of student and school evaluations to identify both individual schools and contextual and school conditions that indicate situations in need of special pedagogical and managerial support. Interaction between schools that have been identified as well performing, and those that have difficulties in achieving educational standards, could perhaps become one of the strategies of support.

A fruitful relationship among non-punitive assessment, the fostering of school autonomy, the differential support to the schools that need it the most on the part of the education system, and the requirement of accountability on the part of the school, would thus seem the most sensible course for an education system characterized by inequality such as the Mexican case that we have described here. This, of course, requires qualitative leaps on the part of both the schools and the education system. Schools must put the student, and his/her learning, at the centre of their pursuit. The system must place each school, according to its conditions, problems and potential, at the centre of its activity.

Notes

1. I refer to the well-known and growing body of literature on school effectiveness and school improvement.
2. The present administration took office 1 December 2000. For the first time in seventy-one years, elections were won by an opposition party. Cf. Rangel Sostmann, 2000.
3. Secretaría de Educación Pública. 1997. The course is also offered in the programme for the initial training of pre-school and lower secondary schoolteachers.
4. Secretaría de Educación Pública. 2000*b*. The course is also offered for secondary school principals and supervisors.
5. Part of this section is based on Schmelkes, 2001.
6. There is a programme for the promotion of teachers that includes an evaluation of their students. As part of this programme, around 7 million students are tested yearly in primary and secondary schools. There is an on-going longitudinal study for the evaluation of primary schools that has collected data in the same schools for five years. A diagnostic evaluation of students entering secondary schools (an aptitude test) has been carried out for ten years in certain cities within the country. A national evaluation based on both primary school standards for reading and mathematics has been carried out with a nationally representative sample of schools for three consecutive years, and for the first time in secondary schools. Mexico has participated in the following international studies: The TIMSS and the TIMSS-R, the international assessment of third-grade students co-ordinated by the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Office of UNESCO (Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad) and, more recently, the PISA project of OECD.
7. Article 31 of the General Law of Education states: 'Educational authorities will inform

teachers, students, parents, and society at large, of the results of evaluations and of other information that allows for the measurement of the development and progress of education in each state'. Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1993.

8. Cf., for example, Observatorio Ciudadano de la Educación, 1999. Also in: www.observatorio.org.
9. In Mexico, textbooks for primary school students are free. There are also books for the teacher, cards for the development of mathematical competences, and a classroom library. It has been found that in many cases these materials are not used, or not sufficiently exploited.
10. The project excludes schools that have more than one class per teacher. Many schools are 'multigrade'. It is not easy to have a reliable statistic of these schools, but 25% of all primary schools had only one teacher in 1998/99. Ezpeleta & Weiss, 2000.
11. What follows is based on Schmelkes, Forthcoming.
12. During the last year of the administration, the same exercise was carried out for lower secondary education also. However, in this article I refer only to results at the primary education level.
13. There are practically no private rural schools in Mexico. Private primary schools represent 5% of the total number of schools in the country, and give service to approximately 10% of the primary school students.
14. Cursos Comunitarios is a form of supplying primary education to very small rural communities (under thirty school-age children). There is one 'para-teacher' (secondary school graduate) for the three levels (instead of six grades) of primary education.
15. Indigenous schools offer bilingual education to primary school children of the sixty-two different ethnic and linguistic groups in the country.
16. What follows is based on Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1999.

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MODERN EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

Saif R. Samady

Historical antecedent

Learning and civilization have flourished during many eras of Afghan history. A cradle and crossroads of ancient civilizations, Afghanistan has contributed to enriching the culture of the region in which it is located throughout its history. During the Islamic period, many centres of learning were established in cities such as Balkh, Herat and Ghazni, which produced scholars in philosophy, literature and science to serve the people of the region and beyond. The tenth-century medical treaties written by Ibn-i-Seena Balkhi were used in universities until the end of nineteenth century. Many Afghan poets and philosophers have enriched human thought and civilization. These include the tenth-century Abu Rayhan Biruni, eleventh-century Hakim Sanai, thirteenth-century Khwaja Abdullah Ansari and Maulana Jalaludin Roumi, and the seventeenth-century Kushal Khan Khattak and Rahman Baba. The nineteenth-century Afghan political philosopher Jamaludin Afghani, who had many disciples, travelled through Asia, Africa and Europe to promote national independence and Islamic solidarity and to explain the relation between Islam, science and progress.

Original language: English

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At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Islamic tradition permeated every aspect of Afghan society, including education and training at all levels. Education was provided at home, in the mosques, in informal schools linked to mosques, in religious centres (Madrasa) and in circles of scholars. These institutions were supported by parents, local communities, religious and tribal leaders and through private resources. The Madrasa provided general knowledge and theological studies for young men and prepared religious and community guides and teachers. Some opportunities for studies in areas such as writing, poetry and literature, history, science and traditional medicine were available through private tutoring and in small informal circles. Mosques and related schools served as basic community centres in which pupils could study the *Koran*, learn about Islamic values and ethics, and acquire literacy and numeracy. Traditional education also helped prepare young people (mainly boys) for work through informal apprenticeships in local arts and crafts, farming and commerce.

Educational developments during the twentieth century reflected the religious and traditional character of Afghan society. Afghanistan's changing political context, including the social and economic policies of the successive regimes and the public's aspiration for the education of their children, influenced the nature and form of education and its expansion. In light of the multi-ethnic composition of Afghan society, cultural and linguistic policies were important factors in the development of education. Textbooks and educational materials were prepared in two national languages (Pashto and Dari).

A number of factors have hindered educational development in Afghanistan. The country is landlocked. Its economy is agricultural (85% of the population live in rural areas) and its resources unexploited. Economic constraints have proven to be the major obstacles to its educational development. Its GDP per capita was at US$60 in 1960, US$160 in 1976, and estimated at about US$600 in 1995. Its domestic product increased from 12.5 billion Afs. in 1953 to 90.0 billion Afs. in 1976.[1] In the 1960s, the United Nations classified Afghanistan as one of the world's twenty-five least developed countries.

In the second half of the last century, the international organizations played an important role in stimulating educational developments worldwide by setting norms and targets and by providing technical and financial assistance. This international co-operation contributed to the expansion and qualitative improvement of modern education in Afghanistan.

Pre-Second World War developments

The beginning of modern education in Afghanistan corresponds with the 1903 establishment of the first secondary school, Habibia, in Kabul. Afghan and foreign teachers were recruited for Habibia, the aim of which was to train personnel for the civil service. Soon after, several modern primary schools and a teacher training institution were established. In 1909, the government set up a Board of Education to supervise education across the country, including traditional educational institutions. The board's duties included that of approving school curriculum and textbooks. Following Afghanistan's independence from the United Kingdom in 1919, King Ammanullah's government made educational development a high priority and the first minister of education was appointed in 1922. During the 1920s, a number of primary and secondary schools—including a school for girls and an adult education centre for women—were established in Kabul, along with several vocational schools in areas such as agriculture, arts and crafts and public administration. For the first time, Afghan boys and girls were sent abroad for studies. The establishment of diplomatic and cultural relations with foreign countries contributed to the development of a modern education system. Through bilateral co-operation with countries such as Turkey, France and Germany, foreign teachers and expertise as well as student scholarships were made available to Afghans.

Educational development experienced a set-back in 1929 when modern schools were closed during the nine months of civil strife and anarchy that followed the January abdication of King Ammanullah. When, following upon this period of conflict, Nadir Shah became king of Afghanistan, the country's thirteen primary and secondary schools were reopened and attention was again given to the development of education. A new constitution, adopted in 1931, made primary schooling compulsory for Afghans and placed all modern educational institutions under the control of the State. (Traditional educational entities remained independent.) Education at all levels—primary through tertiary—was provided free for Afghans. In 1933, Nadir Shah was assassinated and his son Zaher Shah came to the throne.

The Afghan education system saw some expansion during the 1930s. Special attention was given to the development of Pashto as one of the two main national languages of Afghanistan. A number of secondary schools were established in the provinces and several traditional religious schools were modernized and incorporated into the formal educational structure. A secondary school for girls was established in Kabul, along with two secondary vocational schools—one mechanical, the other agricultural—and a school for the training of assistant doctors and pharmacists. Turkish medical advisers and several Afghan doctors, who had trained abroad, aided in the creation in 1932 of the Faculty of Medicine—which was later to evolve into the University of Kabul, officially established in 1946. The Faculty of Medicine graduated the first group of eight intern doctors and twelve pharmacists in 1937. With a view to the social and economic development of Afghanistan, in 1938 the government sent a group of secondary school graduates to universities in France, Germany and the United States.

The pace of educational development in Afghanistan slowed down considerably during the Second World War—during which Afghanistan remained neutral—because of a variety of economic and technical constraints: most foreign experts and teachers left the country, and equipment and materials needed for educational institutions could not be imported. Nonetheless, by the end of the Second World War, the Afghan education system had expanded. During the twenty-year period beginning in 1930, the number of students had risen from 1,590 to 95,300, 4,350 of whom were girls. The number of teachers had increased from fifty-three in 1930 to some 3,000 in 1950; they served 368 schools, including 308 primary schools, twenty-five lower secondary schools (middle schools), sixteen upper secondary schools (lycees), four vocational schools, one teacher training school and seven formal religious schools. There were also 456 students, of which forty were female, in five institutions of higher education. By the middle of the twentieth-century, 6% of Afghan children, ages 6-12, were enrolled in primary schools, out of an estimated population of 11 million people.

Post-Second World War developments

After 1945, in the context of political reform, the beginnings of a short-lived democratic movement and the return of a number of Afghan specialists from abroad, several important measures were taken to encourage educational development in Afghanistan. In 1947, the Ministry of Education was reorganized to ensure the further development of primary, secondary, technical and vocational and teacher education. At this time, more focus was also placed on the improvement and production of textbooks, provision of teaching equipment and materials and school construction (all of which fell within the ministry's portfolio). To promote the expansion of education, increased authority and resources were delegated away from the central office and toward provincial offices throughout the country.

From the early 1950s, the Afghan Government focused on the systematic expansion of education and the improvement of educational quality. It launched a number of development plans, financed through both internal resources as well as bilateral and multilateral technical assistance funds and loans from the international community—including the United Nations and countries such as the United States, the former USSR and Germany. In the first of three five-year development plans (for the period 1956–61), 6.5% of the national budget was devoted to social services, with 958 million Afs. earmarked for education. This plan focused principally on primary schooling.

In view of the country's need for a trained workforce, the second five-year plan (for the period 1962–67) emphasized secondary, technical and higher education. In this plan, the share of the national budget for social services was increased to 11.2%, with 1,759 million Afs. earmarked for education. The third five-year plan (for the period 1968–73) paid special attention to qualitative improvements in teacher education and reflected a commitment to the balanced expansion of education at all levels. This time, 16.7% of the total nation budget was allocated to social services, with over 3,000 million (or 3 billion) Afs. targeted for education. While primary education expanded as a result of these development plans, it was secondary education that experienced the fastest growth—as a result of public demand, especially in the provinces.

Following a coup d'état in 1973, after which Afghanistan was proclaimed a republic and Mohammad Daoud (a former prime minister and cousin of King Zaher) became head of state, Afghanistan launched a seven-year economic and social development plan (for the period 1976–83). Its aim was to accelerate economic growth

PROFILES OF FAMOUS EDUCATORS

BASIL BERNSTEIN

(1924–2000)

Alan R. Sadovnik[1]

Basil Bernstein, Karl Mannheim Chair Emeritus in the Sociology of Education, at the Institute of Education, University of London, born on 1 November 1924, died on 24 September 2000 after a prolonged battle with throat cancer. Professor Bernstein was one of the leading sociologists in the world, whose pioneering work over the past four decades illuminated our understanding of the relationship among political economy, family, language and schooling. Although committed to equity and social justice, or in his own words, 'preventing the wastage of working class educational potential' (1961*b*, p. 308), his work was often misunderstood and incorrectly labelled a form of 'cultural deficit' theory. Nothing could be more inaccurate.

Raised in London's East End, the son of a Jewish immigrant family, Bernstein's career reflected his concern for understanding and eliminating the barriers to upward social mobility. After serving as an underage bombardier in Africa in the Second World War, he worked in the Stepney settlement boys' club for underprivileged Jewish children. He put himself through the London School of Economics by working various menial jobs and earned a degree in sociology. He completed teacher education at Kingsway Day College and from 1954 to 1960, he taught a variety of subjects, including mathematics and physical education, at City Day College in Shoreditch. In pure Goffmanesque style, he also taught driver education and motor

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Original language: English

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repair, despite the fact that he did not drive; a fact that he successfully concealed from his students.

In 1960, Bernstein began graduate work at University College, London, where he completed his Ph.D. in linguistics. He then moved to the Institute of Education, where he stayed for his entire career, rising from senior lecturer to reader to professor, to the Mannheim Chair. During his tenure at the Institute, he also served as head of the influential Sociological Research Unit in the 1960s and 1970s and as Pro-Director of Research in the 1980s. He continued his prolific writing as an emeritus professor until his death. The recipient of many honorary doctorates and awards, he posthumously received the American Sociological Association Sociology of Education Section Willard Waller Award for Lifetime Contributions to the sociology of education in 2001. He is survived by his wife of over forty years Marion, a psychologist, and their two sons, Saul and Francis.

The evolution of Bernstein's thought

For over four decades, Basil Bernstein was an important and controversial sociologist, whose work influenced a generation of sociologists of education and linguists. From his early works on language, communication codes and schooling, to his later works on pedagogic discourse, practice and educational transmissions, Bernstein produced a theory of social and educational codes and their effect on social reproduction. Although structuralist in its approach, Bernstein's sociology drew on the essential theoretical orientations in the field—Durkheimian, Weberian, Marxist, and interactionist—and provided the possibility of an important synthesis. Primarily, however, he viewed his work as most heavily influenced by Durkheim.

Karabel and Halsey (1977), in their review of the literature on the sociology of education, called Bernstein's work the 'harbinger of a new synthesis,' a view entirely justified by subsequent events (p. 62). Bernstein's early sociolinguistic work was highly controversial, as it discussed social class differences in language, that some labelled a deficit theory. It nonetheless raised crucial questions about the relationships among the social division of labour, the family and the school, and explored how these relationships affected differences in learning among the social classes. His later work (Bernstein, 1977) began the difficult project of connecting power and class relations to the educational processes of the school. Whereas class reproduction theorists, such as Bowles and Gintis (1976), offered an overtly deterministic view of schools without describing or explaining what goes on in schools, Bernstein's work connected the societal, institutional, interactional and intrapsychic levels of sociological analysis.

Bernstein's early work on language (Bernstein, 1958; 1960; 1961*a*) examined the relationship between public language, authority and shared meanings (Danzig, 1995, p. 146–47). By 1962, Bernstein began the development of code theory through the introduction of the concepts of restricted and elaborated codes (Bernstein, 1962*a*; 1962*b*). In the first volume of *Class, codes and control* (1973*a*), Bernstein's sociolinguistic code theory was developed into a social theory examining the relationships between social class, family and the reproduction of meaning systems (code refers to the principles regulating meaning systems). For Bernstein, there were social class differences in the communication codes of working-class and middle-class children; differences that reflect the class and power relations in the social division of labour, family and schools. Based upon empirical research, Bernstein distinguished between the restricted code of the working-class and the elaborated code of the middle-class. Restricted codes are context dependent and particularistic, whereas elaborated codes are context independent and universalistic.

Although Bernstein's critics (see Danzig, 1995) argued that his sociolinguistic theory represented an example of deficit theory, alleging that he was arguing that working-class language was deficient, Bernstein consistently rejected this interpretation (see Bernstein, 1996, p. 147–56). Bernstein argued that restricted codes are not deficient, but rather are functionally related to the social division of labour, where context dependent language is necessary in the context of production. Likewise, the elaborated code of the middle classes represents functional changes necessitated by changes in the division of labour and the middle classes' new position in reproduction, rather than production. That schools require an elaborated code for success means that working-class children are disadvantaged by the dominant code of schooling, not that their language is deficient. For Bernstein, difference became deficit in the context of macro-power relations.

Beginning with the third volume of *Class, codes and control* (1977), Bernstein developed code theory from its sociolinguistic roots to examine the connection between communication codes and pedagogic discourse and practice. In this respect, code theory became concerned with the processes of schooling and how they related to social class reproduction. Bernstein's quest for understanding the processes of schooling led him to continue to pursue the fruitful avenue of inquiry developed in his article 'Class and pedagogies: visible and invisible' (Bernstein, 1977, p. 116–56). In that article, Bernstein analyzed the differences between two types of educational transmission and suggested that the differences in the classification and framing rules of each pedagogic practice (visible = strong classification and strong framing; invisible = weak classification and weak framing) relate to the social-class position and assumptions of the families served by the schools. (For a detailed analysis of this aspect of Bernstein's work, see Atkinson, 1985; Atkinson, Davies & Delamont, 1995; Sadovnik, 1991; 1995.) The article clearly demonstrated that sociologists of education had to do the difficult empirical work of looking into the world of schools and of linking educational practices to the larger institutional, societal and historical factors of which they are a part.

The concept of classification is at the heart of Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse and practice. Classification refers to 'the degree of boundary maintenance between contents' (Bernstein 1973*a*, p. 205; 1973*b*, p. 88) and is concerned with the insulation or boundaries between curricular categories (areas of knowledge and subjects). Strong classification refers to a curriculum that is highly differentiated and separated into traditional subjects; weak classification refers to a curriculum that is integrated and in which the boundaries between subjects are fragile.

Using the concept of classification, Bernstein outlined two types of curriculum codes: collection and integrated codes. The first refers to a strongly classified curriculum; the latter, to a weakly classified curriculum. In keeping with his Durkheimian project, Bernstein analyzed the way in which the shift from collection to integrated curriculum codes represents the evolution from mechanical to organic solidarity (or from traditional to modern society), with curricular change marking the movement from the sacred to the profane.

Whereas classification is concerned with the organization of knowledge into curriculum, framing is related to the transmission of knowledge through pedagogic practices. Framing refers to the location of control over the rules of communication and, according to Bernstein (1990), 'if classification regulates the voice of a category then framing regulates the form of its legitimate message' (p. 100). Furthermore, 'frame refers to the degree of control teacher and pupil possess over the selection, organization, pacing and timing of the knowledge transmitted and received in the pedagogical relationship' (1973*b*, p. 88). Therefore, strong framing refers to limited options between teacher and students; weak framing implies more freedom.

Bernstein developed this approach into a systematic analysis of pedagogic discourse and practices. First, he outlined a theory of pedagogic rules that examined the 'intrinsic features which constitute and distinguish the specialized form of communication realized by the pedagogic discourse of education' (Bernstein, 1990, p. 165). Second, he related his theory of pedagogic discourse to a social-class base and applied it to the development of educational practices (Bernstein, 1990, p. 63–93).

The concept of code was central to Bernstein's sociology. From the outset of its use in his work on language (restricted and elaborated codes), code refers to a 'regulative principle which underlies various message systems, especially curriculum and pedagogy' (Atkinson, 1985, p. 136). Curriculum and pedagogy are considered message systems, and with a third system, evaluation, they constitute the structure and processes of school knowledge, transmission and practice. As Bernstein (1973*b*) noted: 'Curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge, pedagogy defines what counts as valid transmission of knowledge, and evaluation defines what counts as a valid realization of the knowledge on the part of the taught' (p. 85). Thus, his theory of education must be understood in terms of the concepts of classification, framing and evaluation, and their relationship to his sociological project.

Following this earlier work on curriculum and pedagogic practice was a detailed analysis of pedagogic discourse that presented a complex analysis of the recontextualization of knowledge through the pedagogic device (see Bernstein, 1990). Bernstein's work on pedagogic discourse was concerned with the production, distribution and reproduction of official knowledge and how this knowledge is related to structurally determined power relations. What is critical is that Bernstein was concerned with more than the description of the production and transmission of knowledge; he was concerned with its consequences for different groups.

Bernstein's analysis of pedagogic practice looked at the process and content of what occurs inside schools. His theory of pedagogic practice examined a series of rules, considered both how these rules affect the content to be transmitted and, perhaps more important, how they 'act selectively on those who can successfully acquire it.' From an analysis of these rules, Bernstein examined 'the social class assumptions and consequences of forms of pedagogic practice' (Bernstein, 1990, p. 63). Finally, he applied this theory to conservative/traditional versus progressive/child-centred practices. He differentiated between a pedagogic practice that is dependent on the economic market—that emphasizes vocational education—and another that is independent and autonomous of the market—that is legitimated by the autonomy of knowledge. Bernstein concluded that both, despite their claims to the contrary, would not eliminate the reproduction of class inequalities. Through a consideration of the inner workings of the types of educational practice, Bernstein contributed to a greater understanding of how schools reproduce social-class advantages in society.

Bernstein's analysis of the social-class assumptions of pedagogic discourse and practice is the foundation for linking micro-educational processes to the macro-sociological levels of social structure and class and power relations. His thesis was that there are significant differences in the social-class assumptions of visible and invisible pedagogy and despite these differences there may indeed be similar outcomes, especially in the reproduction of power and symbolic control.

Thus, from his early work on code theory to the more recent works in *Class, codes and control,* volumes 4 and 5 on pedagogic discourse (1990, p. 165–218), and on pedagogic practices (1990; 1996), Bernstein's project sought to link micro-processes (language, transmission and pedagogy) to macroforms—to how cultural and educational codes and the content and process of education are related to social class and power relations.

Bernstein and sociological theory

Karabel and Halsey argued that one of the most unresolved problems of Bernstein's work is how 'power relationships penetrate the organization, distribution and evaluation of knowledge through the social context' (qtd. in Karabel & Halsey, 1977, p. 71). From the 1970s on, Bernstein continued to search for answers to this question and developed an increasingly sophisticated model for understanding how the classification and framing rules of education affect the transmission, the distribution and, perhaps, the transformation of consciousness, and how these processes are indirectly related to the economic field of production.

Bernstein conceded that those who seek answers to difficult educational questions often prefer a top-down approach—one that begins with the large policy questions and builds down to an analysis of how the schools work to provide solutions or to constrain their formulation. He admitted, however, that the nature of his project was to build from the bottom to the top—an approach that sought to write the rules of educational process; then to link them to larger structural conditions; and, finally, to place this analysis in the context of the larger educational and policy questions of educators (Bernstein, 1990).

His theoretical approach has been labelled Durkheimian, neo-Marxist, structuralist and interactionist, as well as being part of the 'new sociology'. Bernstein

(1996) stated that these have been the labels of others and that they have often been too exclusive, often simplifying the theoretical complexity of his model. He acknowledged that Durkheim has always been at the heart of his sociological theory, in part as a corrective to the conservative interpretation of Durkheim's work, especially in the United States; in part as a consequence of Parson's structural-functional interpretation of Durkheim. Additionally, although he acknowledged the structuralist interpretations of his work by Atkinson (1985) and Sadovnik (1991), he did not see his work as exclusively structuralist. He rejected the view that he was part of the 'new sociology', as he believed that his work was 'old' sociology, particularly in terms of its roots in classical sociological theory. Finally, he suggested that the idea that it was his project to connect disparate sociological theories was not his but was suggested by others, particularly Karabel and Halsey (1977). Although their labelling of his work as the 'harbinger of a new synthesis' was complimentary, it also raised an expectation of a kind of synthesis that has not been explicitly part of his project. Rather than working from one sociological theory, or attempting to synthesize a number of theories, Bernstein attempted to develop and refine a model that is capable of describing the different aspects of society.

Bernstein's project, from his early work on language, to the development of code theory, to the work on curriculum and pedagogic practice and discourse, was to develop a systematic theory that provides an analytic description of the way in which the education system is related to the social division of labour. His work had at its core the goal of his entire project: to develop a Durkheimian theory that analyzed the way in which changes in the division of labour create different meaning systems and codes, provided analytic classifications of these systems, and incorporated a conflict model of unequal power relations into its structural approach.

Atkinson (1981; 1985) argued that the evolution of Bernstein's sociology must be understood as the movement from its early Durkheimian roots to a later convergence with European structuralist thought, especially French social theory. In the United States, however, because the Durkheimian tradition was appropriated both by Parsonian structural-functionalism and by positivism, Bernstein's work was rarely linked to Durkheim and structuralism or was criticized for being linked to Durkheim. For example, Karabel and Halsey (1977) spoke of his need to link his Durkheimian perspective more explicitly to neo-Marxist categories. While his work on pedagogic discourse and practice clearly did link the two, Bernstein never moved out of a Durkheimian position; rather, he incorporated the neo-Marxist and Weberian categories of class and power relations into his overall theory. It is necessary to remove the consensus aspects of functionalism that are associated with structural-functionalism to understand Bernstein's sociology. Although his work has been concerned with how communication, cultural and educational codes function in relation to social structures, Bernstein was concerned not with the way in which such functioning leads to consensus but with how it forms the basis of privilege and domination.

It is with respect to the relationship with privilege and domination that Bernstein's work, while remaining consistent with a Durkheimian foundation, systematically integrated Marxism and Weberian categories and provided the possibilities for the synthesis for which Karabel and Halsey call. Bernstein's work continued to be Durkheimian because, as Atkinson (1985, p. 36) pointed out, an essential activity has been the exploration of changes from mechanical to organic solidarity through an analysis of the division of labour, boundary maintenance, social roles, the ritual-expressive order, cultural categories, social control and types of messages. It attempted to look at modes of cultural transmission through the analysis of codes. In addition, his work continued to link classification and framing codes to the unequal distribution of resources in capitalist societies. While the early work on class and pedagogy was clearly more Durkheimian in its analysis of changes in organic solidarity, his later work (Bernstein, 1990; 1996) was more interested in the consequences of different pedagogic practices for different social classes and, most important, returned to the very questions of education and inequality that were the original basis of the project over forty years ago.

Thus, Bernstein's project, since the 1970s, accomplished a number of related and important things. First, it provided a theory of school knowledge and transmission and demonstrated how the *what* of education is transmitted. Second, it linked the sociolinguistic aspects of his early work to the analysis of the codes of schooling. Third, in relating the process and content of schooling to differences in social class and in calling for an analysis of the consequences of those differences in curriculum and pedagogy, Bernstein provided a tentative integration of structuralist and conflict approaches within sociology.

Criticism of Bernstein's work

Much of the criticism of Bernstein's early work revolved around issues of deficit and difference. Bernstein rejected the view that his work was based on either a deficit or a difference approach. Rather, he argued that his code theory attempted to connect the macro-levels of family and educational structures and processes and to provide an explanation for unequal educational performance. He stated:

> The code theory asserts that there is a social class regulated unequal distribution of privileging principles of communication [. . .] and that social class, indirectly, effects the classification and framing of the elaborated code transmitted by the school so as to facilitate and perpetuate its unequal acquisition. Thus the code theory accepts neither a deficit nor a difference position but draws attention to the relations between macro power relations and micro practices of transmission, acquisition and evaluation and the positioning and oppositioning to which these practices give rise (1990, p. 118–19).

Despite Bernstein's continued refutation of the cultural deprivation label, these distortions had profoundly negative consequences for his work. For example, Hymes reported: 'a young anthropologist recently told me that as a student she found Bernstein's account of restricted code to describe her own family but was told by a faculty member not to read him' (Hymes, 1995, p. 5). When Bernstein came to a United States university in 1987, an anthropologist asked why 'that fascist Bernstein [had been] invited'. When pressed, the anthropologist admitted that she had never read Bernstein's own work, but that she had read secondary sources accusing him of racism. Danzig cites examples in textbooks written in the 1990s that continue to portray Bernstein in this light (Danzig, 1995, p. 152).

The mischaracterization of Bernstein's work in the 1960s and 1970s continued to affect Bernstein's standing in the intellectual field through the 1990s. Although the Bernstein symposium at the American Educational Research Association's (AERA) annual meeting in 1991, Atkinson and Sadovnik's 1995 volumes, and Bernstein's appearance at AERA's 1996 annual meeting did much to refute these negative claims, significant damage had already been done.

A second criticism regards Bernstein's writing style, which many found dense, difficult and often incomprehensible (Walford, 1995, p. 193). Although Bernstein's work was indeed complex and difficult, this is no less true of other major sociological theorists, most notably Pierre Bourdieu (Swartz, 1997). In fact, it is in comparison to Bourdieu that some critics found Bernstein's work wanting.

Harker and May (1993) indicated that despite overlapping concerns, Bourdieu provided a more flexible approach to the structure/agency problem in social theory. Through a comparison of Bernstein's concept of code and Bourdieu's concept of habitus, the authors argued that Bernstein was a structuralist, a position that they believe Bourdieu had rejected, and that Bernstein's concept of code resulted in an overemphasis on 'rules'. Bourdieu's concept of habitus, they argued, resulted in the more flexible idea of 'strategy', which Harker and May suggested resulted in a less dichotomous view of structure and agency (1993, p. 169). Bernstein (1996) responded to the Harker and May thesis by saying that it was one more example of 'misrecognition'. He accused the authors of recycling out-of-date definitions of code and misreading code theory (p. 182–201). Through a detailed use of various quotations from his work over time, Bernstein rejected Harker and May's criticism that his structuralism denied human agency.

Harker and May's article also revealed significant disagreements between Bernstein and Bourdieu. For example, they quoted Bourdieu on Bernstein:

> To reproduce in scholarly discourse the fetishing of legitimate language which actually takes place in society one has only to follow the example of Basil Bernstein who describes the properties of the elaborated code without relating this social product to the social conditions of its production and reproduction or even as one might expect from the sociology of education to its own academic conditions (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 53).

Bernstein, responding to this Bourdieu quote stated, 'This comment, reproduced with evident approval by Harker and May, is not simply inaccurate, or only slovenly scholarship, but bizarre. If it reveals anything it reveals the activities of the intellectual field, its positioning, position taking and strategies in a somewhat primitive mode' (Bernstein, 1996, p. 183).

Bernstein, too, was critical of Bourdieu. He distinguished code from habitus in the following way: 'The concept of code bears some relation to Bourdieu's concept of habitus. The concept of habitus, however, is a more general concept, more extensive and exhaustive in its regulation. It is essentially a cultural grammar specialized by class positions and fields of practice' (Bernstein, 1990, p. 3). Bernstein went on to argue that theories like Bourdieu's were concerned with understanding 'how external power relations [were] *carried* by the system . . . [and not] with the designation of the carrier, only with a diagnosis of its pathology' (1990, p. 172).

Another criticism of Bernstein's work has been that it lacked empirical testing and support. King (1976; 1981) tested Bernstein's early model of pedagogic practice but did not find strong evidence in his research to support this model; however, Tyler (1984) argued that King's statistical methods were severely flawed. More recently, researchers (see Sadovnik, 1995, Parts IV and V; Morais et al., 2001) have provided empirical evidence to support Bernstein's work. A more detailed account is provided in the next section.

Whatever the criticisms of his work, it is undeniable that Bernstein's work represents one of the most sustained and powerful attempts to investigate significant issues in the sociology of education. Forty years ago, Bernstein began with a simple but overwhelming issue: how to find ways to 'prevent the wastage of working-class educational potential' (Bernstein, 1961*b*, p. 308). The problem of educability led to the development of code theory. Code theory, while a powerful and controversial perspective on educational inequality, did not sufficiently provide an understanding of what goes on inside the schools and how these practices are systematically related to social-class advantages and disadvantages. In an attempt to connect the macro and the micro further, Bernstein's work since the 1960s centred on a model of pedagogic discourse and practices, beginning with the concepts of classification and framing and continuing to a more systematic outline of the 'what' and the 'how' of education. Taken as a whole, Bernstein's work provided a systematic analysis of codes, pedagogic discourse and practice and their relationship to symbolic control and identity.

Bernstein's influence on educational research

Bernstein had a profound influence on sociological research on education. He pointed to years of empirical research in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, which attempted to test his theories. Studies conducted by his doctoral students at the University of London's Institute of Education and others have contributed to our knowledge of the relationships between the division of labour, the family and schooling through research on specific aspects of Bernstein's work. In a detailed and comprehensive chapter in his last book, *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity* (1996), Bernstein provided a historical discussion of code theory and outlined some of the empirical work to test it. As the research in the 1960s and early 1970s was often conducted by Bernstein's Ph.D. students as their dissertation research, the Sociological Research Unit at the Institute of Education, which he directed, became a primary testing ground for Bernstein's theories.

The core of Bernstein's early work was to develop a code theory that examined the interrelationships between social class, family and school. By 1971, Bernstein had developed an Index of Communication and Control to measure different family types and to relate them to social class differences. As the original index, according to Bernstein (1996, p. 96), was crude and indirect, Bernstein sought to develop a more direct and sensitive measure. Based upon empirical research, Bernstein and Jenny Cook-Gumperz developed 'complex principles of descriptions of the speech of parents and children' (Bernstein & Cook-Gumperz, 1973). Cook-Gumperz provided an in-depth description of these principles in her own work (Cook-Gumperz, 1973, p. 48–73).

In the 1970s, a number of empirical studies examined the concepts of classification and framing. Neves (1991) studied the relationship between the pedagogic codes of families and schools and provided empirical support for Bernstein's thesis. Ana Marie Morais and her colleagues (Morais, Peneda, Madeiros, 1991; Morais et al., 1991) demonstrated that it was possible to design different pedagogic practices and to evaluate their outcomes. She designed three different pedagogic practices in terms of varying degrees of classification and framing and trained a teacher to teach the same subject to four different classes using different pedagogic practices. Based upon her research the complex relationship between the pedagogic code of the family and the school, social class differences in families, the educational development, the educational achievement and behaviour of the child was more fully understood.

Bernstein's analysis of the relationship between social class and pedagogic practice was confirmed by Jenkins' research (1990) on the social class basis of progressive education in Britain. Through an analysis of articles in the *Journal of the New Education Fellowship* between 1920 and 1950, she supported Bernstein's central thesis about the social class basis of invisible pedagogy, which Jenkins argued was precisely what the progressives were talking about. Semel (1995) further supported this thesis as applied to independent schools in the United States from 1914 to 1935.

The relationship between the fields of symbolic control and production and gender classification was explored by Holland (1986). Her study concluded that socialization processes differ in classification and framing in relation to the place of families in the division of labour. Families in the field of symbolic control have weaker classification in their modelling of domestic and economic divisions of labour than families in the field of production. Holland's work provided important empirical evidence to support Bernstein's thesis that classification and framing are social class related and related to the fields of production and symbolic control. Further, this study broadened the emphasis away from class reproduction to the related and equally significant area of gender role reproduction.

The work of Diaz (1984; 1990) and Cox Donoso (1986) examined Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse. Diaz's research explored the institutionalizing of primary education as a form of pedagogic discourse. Cox Donoso work on State education in Chile related the model of pedagogic discourse to the field of symbolic control. Cox Donoso's research compared the educational policies of the Christian Democratic Party and Allende's Popular Unity Party. Through an analysis of the relationship between pedagogic discourses and each party's relationship to the symbolic and economic fields, Cox Donoso provided a concrete sociological and historical testing of Bernstein's theory.

Although much of the research on his theory has been produced by his own Ph.D. students, there were numerous other studies using his work. By 1996, Bernstein reported fifteen articles in the *British journal of the sociology of education* based on the theory. Two published collections (Atkinson, Davies & Delamont, 1995; Sadovnik, 1995) provided numerous examples of how Bernstein's work influenced an international group of educational researchers. Most recently, Morais, Neves, Davies and Daniels (Morais et al., 2001) have edited a collection of articles on Bernstein's contributions to research, which were presented at a symposium in Lisbon in June 2000. Among the research based on Bernstein's work are investigations of pedagogic discourse by Parlo Singh and Karen Dooley, Johann Muller, Rob Moore and Karl Maton, and Mario Diaz; on sociolinguistics by Ruqaiya Hasan, and Geoff Williams, and on technology by William Tyler, and by Bernstein himself. Additionally, Madeleine Arnot (2001) has written on how Bernstein's work affected feminist educational researchers and theorists.

What is clear is that over a forty-year period, Bernstein developed a systematic code theory, which was constantly refined and developed and which, through his students and other researchers, has been empirically researched. Moreover, Bernstein's theories underwent revision and clarification in light of this research. What comes through in his own reflections on his sociological project is how theory and research were crucially related to each other.

Afterward: Basil Bernstein, mentor and friend

I first met Basil Bernstein in 1978 at New York University, when I was a doctoral student and he was a visiting professor. He took an interest in a paper I had written for him applying his work to Bowles and Gintis' *Schooling in capitalist America*. For the next years, he was my mentor, colleague and, most of all, beloved friend.

As a mentor, he was giving of his time and support. Although he responded favourably to my work on him, he nonetheless responded with long letters, always hand-written, always difficult to decipher, pointing to things I had overlooked, new ways of seeing, and full of new insights. While some warned that writing about his work could damage our friendship, it never did. Even when he disagreed with my interpretations, he never asked that I change a word. The process of editing *Knowledge and pedagogy* was one of the most intense and satisfying experiences of my career. Bernstein read and wrote responses to many of the articles in the book; his correspondence on the book is filled with incredible contributions to my own thinking, only a portion of it included in his epilogue. Most of all, Bernstein never forgot that it was my book, not his, and after providing feedback, left the final editing to me. For the next twenty-two years, what began with my watching his incredible mind work out models from the third volume of *Class, codes and control* at New York University, continued as I moved from doctoral student to professor: Bernstein helped me understand the complexities of schooling and social reproduction. As a teacher, he inspired me to help my own students grow and develop intellectually; as a scholar, he inspired me to think sociologically and to insist upon empirical research to support theory.

What I will always cherish most is Basil Bernstein's friendship. I will always remember the wonderful times we shared with him and his wife Marion (to whom he was devoted) at their lovely home in Dulwich, at the National Theatre, at the Tate Gallery, shopping at Harvey Nichols, Liberty's and on Bond Street, and eating and drinking in numerous restaurants near the Institute in Bloomsbury. Bernstein was no narrow academic. He was an arts aficionado, most proud of his David Hockneys; an audiophile, who moved reluctantly from his precious LP collection to CDs; an expert photographer, who was as proud of his photo of Susan Semel in the Hofstra University Research Magazine, complete with the credit, 'photograph by Basil Bernstein', as he was of a journal article; a Beau Brummel, he was fond of Armani and Kenzo. And what a conversationalist he was: ironic, creative, clever, amusing, knowledgeable, and at times, cryptic and sardonic. Whether it was applying code theory to the exploitation of South American farmers at one of his favourite Bloomsbury haunts, Isolabella, or with Eliot Freidson, entertaining us with their tales of 1968 at Berkeley, Bernstein was one of a kind.

The last time I saw Basil Bernstein was in June 2000, upon journeying to London from a conference in Lisbon organized by Ana Morais, Isabel Neves, Harry Daniels and Brian Davies on his contributions to educational research. Too ill to attend as planned, he participated on Friday for the last hour via video link to his home in London. Despite being weak from treatment, he was vintage Basil Bernstein: witty, creative, and dressed for the occasion in one of his favourite silk shirts. His brief written contribution on code theory and technology provided significant food for thought. Upon termination of the link, there was not a dry eye among us. We all knew that this might have been his last public appearance and we all knew how much we would miss him.

On Sunday, following the conference, Susan Semel and I visited Basil Bernstein and his wife Marion in London. Although weak, he spoke of finishing the sixth volume of *Class, codes and control,* applying code theory to the Internet and technology, and of New Labour educational policy, still in his view, like Thatcher's, 'a new pedagogical Janus [. . .]'(Bernstein, 1990) reproducing the old inequalities. Although I left hoping it was not a final goodbye, I knew that it might well be. And it was. When Basil Bernstein died on 24 September 2000, the world of sociology lost a giant. I lost a mentor and friend to whom I will always be grateful.

Note

1. Parts of this article are adapted from Sadovnik, 1991 and 1995 (see references).

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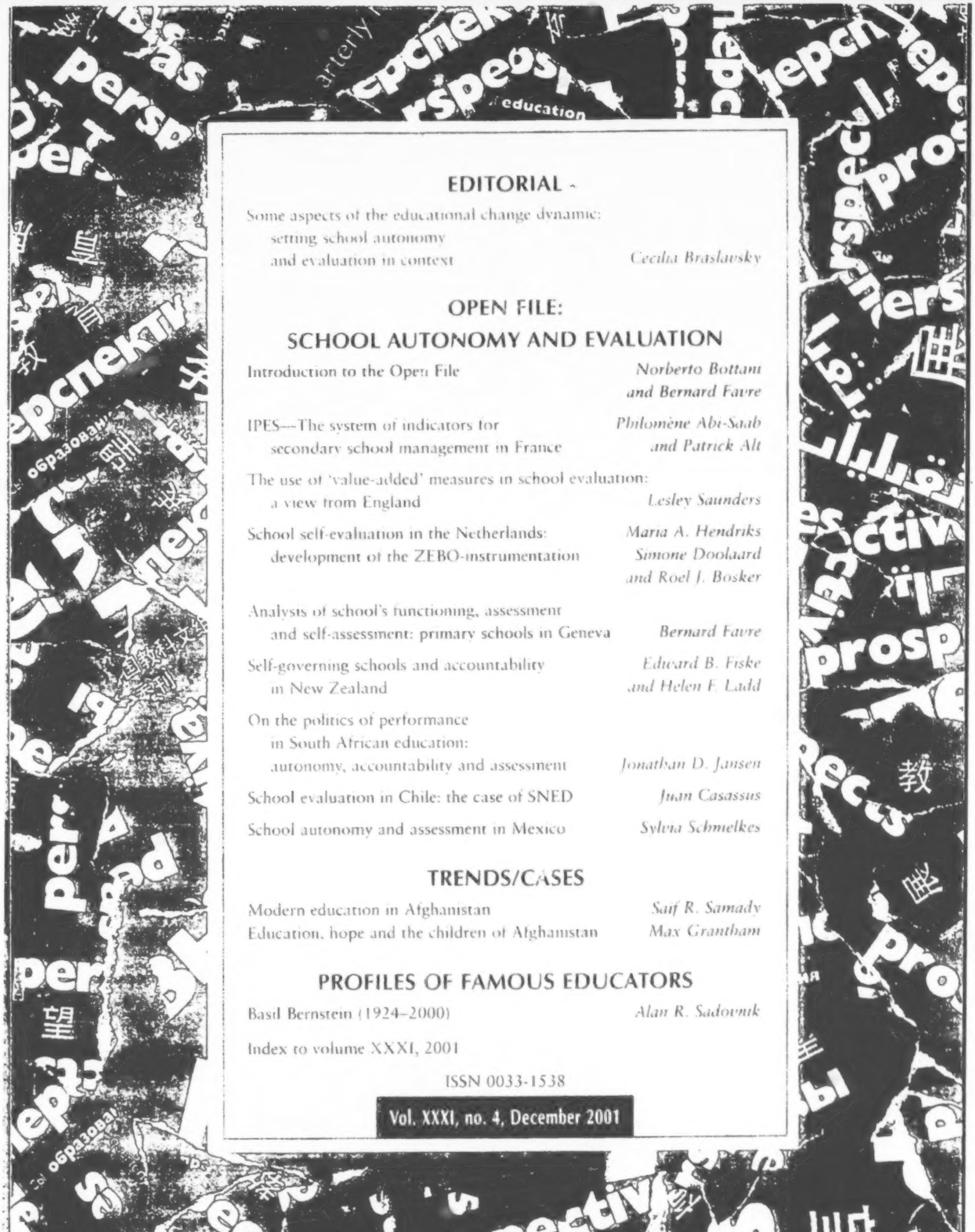

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